

AUTHORITY, RESPONSIBILITY  
AND EDUCATION

*by R. S. Peters and S. I. Benn*

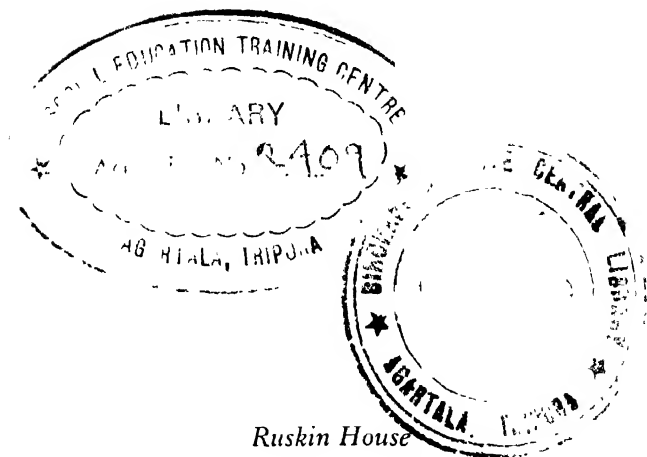
**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES AND THE DEMOCRATIC STATE**

*Edited by R. S. Peters*

**BRETT'S HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY**

RICHARD PETERS

*Authority  
Responsibility and  
Education*



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# PART I

## THE CHANGING FACE OF AUTHORITY







## *The Nature of Authority*

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'AUTHORITY' is a word that has an aura about it, a mystique. And there are some who like to keep it that way. We are told that authority has been re-established in France and we picture a mysterious something emanating from de Gaulle, drawing millions of Frenchmen towards him in a unified pattern like iron filings towards a magnet. And the French philosopher, de Jouvenel, encourages this picture when he writes: 'In any voluntary association that comes to my notice I see the work of a force: that force is authority . . . Everywhere and at all levels social life offers us the daily spectacle of authority fulfilling its primary function—of man leading man on, of the ascendancy of a settled will which summons and orients uncertain wills.' Are we then to suppose that authority is a mysterious something, a force, which people like de Gaulle, and Adenauer, have in their voice and countenance?

It may well be that authority has something to do with the voice and countenance, but it surely is a mistake to conceive of it as a kind of *force*. For that is to make the conformity of men look like the movements of iron filings towards a magnet. But there is conformity and conformity; and 'authority', I would suggest, is a word that is reserved for a type of conformity that is confined to men. Hens have a pecking order; but

it would be very odd to say that one hen exercised authority over other hens. To speak of authority as a force obscures what is distinctive about human conformity which makes it very unlike anything which goes on in the physical or animal world.

What, then, is so distinctive about the conformity of men? Hobbes long ago was impressed by the fact that a civil society is not a natural system like a sponge, a rook, or a beehive; yet it is not a mere multitude of men. What turns a mere multitude into a social system? The basic point surely is that men are rule-following animals. They form social systems because they conform to standards of behaviour which are passed on from generation to generation, largely by means of *speech*, which has a most important regulatory function in the life of men. Language makes possible a quite distinctive form of life. The artifice of speech introduces systems of conformity which have no application in the forest or farmyard. For what human beings do can be described as 'right' or 'correct'; and things are done just because they are known to be right or correct. And this introduces the idea of 'authority'; for as such standards are man-made, alterable, and, to a certain extent, arbitrary, *procedures* are often needed for deciding what standards are right and correct, who is to originate them, who is to decide about their application to particular cases, and who is entitled to introduce changes. These procedures give certain people, like majors and magistrates, a *right* to give orders, to make decisions and pronouncements. Where we find such arrangements for originators or umpires in the realm of rules we find authority.

Philology supports this tentative analysis; for the word 'authority' is obviously derived from 'auctor' and 'auctoritas', which referred to a producing, inventing, or cause in the sphere of opinion, counsel or command. Authority is at hand where a rule is right or a decision must be obeyed or a pronouncement accepted simply because *X* (conforming to some specification) *says* so. Equal emphasis must be placed on the '*X*' and on the '*says*'. For the reference to *X*—the 'auctor'—is as necessary as the reference to the speech or symbolic gesture by means of which he lays down what is correct or decides what is to be done. Obvious examples are the giving of orders by an army commander, the decision of an umpire at cricket or of a judge in a court of law, and an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by a pope on matters of religion or morals. The sort of conformity brought about by such procedures is quite unlike that of iron filings in a field of force or that of hens in a pecking order. For hens and pieces of iron do not follow rules, knowing what they are doing, and they do not speak—let alone have a right to speak.

This analysis, it might be objected, sounds pretty banal. Where is the mystique of authority so evident in the case of de Gaulle? Well, as a matter of fact, in most cases there *is* no mystery about authority. The thing begins to look banal because, perhaps, we are becoming clearer what is implicit in our use of the word 'authority'. The more mundane it seems the better the philosophical job that is being done. But, the job is only just started; for 'authority' is a Protean concept; and there are many of its forms to uncover before we have a proper grip on it.

We usually speak of 'the authorities' or of people

being 'in authority' when their right to command and to make decisions and pronouncements derives from established rules of procedure. But de Gaulle does not fit into this pattern. For de Gaulle was not in authority before he became President. How then can the obvious fact that people recognized his authority be accounted for? The sociologist Max Weber must be called in to help at this point. For he stressed that there are different types of rules which give people rights to command. There are different authority systems with different grounds of legitimacy.

There is, first of all, what he called a legal-rational set-up where the claim to legitimacy rests on a 'belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands'. There is, secondly, traditional authority 'resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them'. A chairman of a Civil Service committee would be an example of legal-rational authority; a medieval baron of traditional authority.

But these types of authority must be carefully distinguished from a third type where the right of the 'auctor' derives from personal history, personal credentials, and personal achievements, an extreme form of which Weber spotlighted when he dealt with what he called 'charismatic' authority—'resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him'. Weber, of course, was thinking primarily of outstanding religious and military leaders like Jesus or Napoleon.

He therefore pitched his account rather high and personal authority was decked with the trappings of vocation, miracles, and revelation. Nevertheless there is something distinctive about the charismatic leader which he shares in an exaggerated form with other 'natural' leaders who exercise authority in virtue of personal claims and personal characteristics. For the reference to personal characteristics is a way of establishing that a man has a right to make pronouncements and issue commands *because he is a special sort of person*. And, although in some societies a man who sees visions and goes into trance states is in danger of electric shock treatment, in other societies pointing to such peculiarities of personal biography are ways of establishing a man as *an* authority in certain spheres.

As a matter of fact we usually speak of a man being *an* authority in the sphere of pronouncements rather than in that of commands and decisions where reference to 'the authorities' or to 'those in authority' is more natural. Thus we speak of a man being an authority on art, music, or nuclear physics. Such a man has not been put in authority; he does not hold authority according to any system of rules. But because of his training, competence, and success in this sphere, he comes to be regarded as an authority, as having a *right* to make pronouncements. And his right derives from his *personal* achievements and history in a specific sphere. These humdrum cases where we speak of a man being *an* authority are similar, in this respect, to Weber's charismatic authority, where the legitimacy also is regarded as being grounded in personal characteristics.

Now the phenomenon of de Gaulle is a clear case of this third type of authority. Here we have a man with

an impressive record of personal achievement combined with a sense of personal vocation, linked with rather mystical notions about the destiny of France, which have a peculiar appeal to Frenchmen. Furthermore the centralization of communications—especially radio and television—make it possible for him to be a familiar figure in the home of every French family. The scene is set for a charismatic coup. But such coups seldom come off unless the other types of authority have been discredited. The legal-rational set-up in France, for instance, was such that it made strong government difficult and those who were in authority exploited the anomalies of the old constitution.

But, it might be said, even the introduction of this third type of authority has not got to the root of the mystery surrounding it. For we must distinguish the *de jure* sense of authority from the *de facto* sense, it being obvious enough that some people who are in authority do not in fact exercise authority, like a schoolmaster with a class which is out of hand; whereas other people, in some sort of Admirable Crichton situation, in fact exercise authority even though they are not in authority. And how is it that some people, like de Gaulle, make a charismatic break-through, whereas others, who are regarded in a vague sense of having some sort of right to be obeyed or believed, remain in obscurity? Have I not just given a formal analysis showing what we mean by 'authority' and distinguishing the different types of authority? What is it about *men* which makes de Jouvenel's talk of a force seem so attractive?

Social psychologists resist strongly the suggestion that there might be any one thing, a mysterious force or

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something like that, that makes a man a leader. It depends largely, they say, on the nature of the group and the job it is formed to do. Nevertheless there do seem to be a few very obvious observations which may help to dispel some of the mystery. There is, for instance, the well-known saying that the office makes the man. People adopt the *persona* which is expected of them—as a chairman for instance—and it has a snowball effect. The same is true in cases where people come to be thought of as authorities on various matters. Often the outcome is disastrous—portentous pronouncements which are unquestionably accepted but which turn out to be wrong. The carry-over to other spheres is a well-known phenomenon—scientists pontificating about politics and so on. Socrates spent much of his life attacking such self-generated oracles.

Another obvious point to be made about this snowball effect is that success is crucial—especially in the case of the charismatic leader, who is often rather like a man who has a knack of spotting a Derby winner without a system. What he says must be right just because it is *he* who has said it. He has some personal incommunicable flair, and the more often he is right the more readily will he be believed or followed. Indeed in some societies there are institutional devices for covering up failure so that the authority can't be wrong.

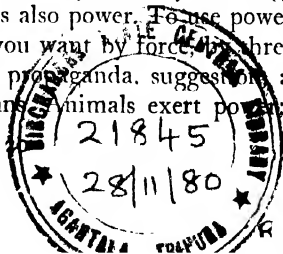
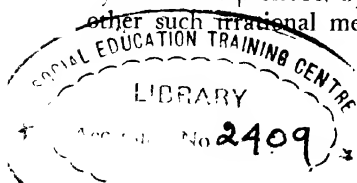
Success, too, strengthens another necessary condition for the effective exercise of authority—the expectation of being believed, followed, or obeyed. People will tend to accept decisions and obey orders in proportion as the man who makes them expects that they will. Any successful schoolmaster knows this. We have phrases like 'an air of authority' and Jesus, it was alleged,

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produced consternation because as a boy he spoke 'with authority' in the temple. In the voice and countenance appear the outward signs of the inner certitude which is usually necessary for the exercise of authority. For it is not sufficient for a man to be in fact wise or a felicitous prophet if he is to exercise authority. He must be known to be so. A man cannot exercise authority if he hides his light under a bushel. And his *persona* must correspond roughly to the image of authority shared by the group. A man who tries to exercise authority in the manner of a sergeant major will get short shrift in a progressive school. And a man who is reasonable and who goes out of his way to consult others and involve them in his decisions may be thought weak or 'not having a mind of his own' in some of the more authoritarian public schools.

Psychological probing such as this might help to dispel further the aura of authority. But it would do little to explain why it is that the modern world seems so prone to produce charismatic figures—a strange phenomenon in view of the spread of enlightenment. As a matter of fact this very spread of enlightenment may have had, to a certain extent, this rather paradoxical result. For such enlightenment has been evident in two main spheres—science and moral argument. And both science and moral argument have been used in social regulation to an increasing extent in the past hundred years to supplement authority, or to take its place.

For authority, of course, is only one way of bringing about conformity. There is also power. To use power is to get others to do what you want by force, by threats, by economic pressure, by propaganda, suggestion, and other such irrational means. Animals exert power; so





do brigands and hypnotists. They produce conformity without being able to give orders or without having to do so. There is a very close connection between power and authority; but I think that they are concepts which belong to different families. Indeed, as de Jouvenel points out, it is only when a system of authority breaks down or when an individual loses his authority that there must be recourse to power if conformity is to be ensured. The concept of 'authority' is necessary to pinpoint ways in which behaviour is regulated *without* recourse to power—to force, propaganda, and threats. And this is intimately bound up with the use of the voice in orders, decisions and pronouncements. It may well be, of course, that the ability to exercise power may be a necessary condition for the exercise of some forms of authority. Behind the voice there is often the cane; behind parliament the army and police, which are legitimized forms of power, with their own internal authority systems. It may also be the case that power is a convincing ground of entitlement as in the old saying 'no legitimacy without power'. But a necessary condition for the exercise of authority or a ground of entitlement to it should not be confused with what 'authority' means.

Now modern science has put into our hands instruments for the exercise of power which were scarcely dreamed of by our ancestors. I need only mention gas-chambers, mass advertising, techniques of propaganda, and nuclear weapons to convey the drift of what I mean. These can be used to reinforce authority of a centralized sort, or they can be used to disrupt it. And they certainly have a tendency to dwarf the importance of old systems of authority which were exercised in a

more face-to-face manner. If they favour any sort of authority, it is usually that of the charismatic sort. Politicians are groomed to get the right sort of oracular aura on television.

Along with the enlightenment of science has come also the enlightenment of morality, which has had a widespread disrupting influence on older systems of authority. For there is a long tradition which stresses the incompatibility between authority and both science and morality. For just as in science the importance of the 'auctor' or originator is at a minimum, it never being justifiable in scientific institutions to set up individuals or bodies who will either be the originators of pronouncements or the arbiters of the truth of pronouncements made; so also it would be held that a rule cannot be a moral rule if it is to be accepted just because someone has laid it down or made a decision between competing alternatives. Reasons must be given, as in science, not originators or umpires produced. Of course, in both enterprises provisional authorities can be consulted. But there are usually good reasons for their choice and their pronouncements are never to be regarded as final just because they have made them. In science and morality there are no appointed law-givers, judges, or policemen.

There is, therefore, a basic procedural hostility between science and morality on the one hand, and authority. This is especially evident in religious matters—another of the established bastions of authority. For in the end, every religion rests on some sort of authoritative criterion, like the Bible, an *ex cathedra* utterance of a pope, or the revelation vouchsafed to an individual

believer. Moral beliefs, on the other hand, like scientific ones, must be rationally justified.

The spread of enlightenment, therefore, in the form of science and morality, has had two main effects in relation to authority. On the one hand it has tended to disrupt and transform it by insisting on reasons for policy rather than authoritative edicts, and by claiming that authority is only to be tolerated if it has some rational justification. This is what Weber was talking about in his account of legal-rational authority. In his view the rise of bureaucracy is the most momentous social development in the Western world.

On the other hand by encouraging the trust in reason it has put on men the joy—or burden—of making decisions for themselves on many matters which were previously left to tradition or to authoritative pronouncements. The psychologists tell us of the difficulty which we have in outgrowing our need for the authoritative figure of the father. The family being on the decline as a social institution, and the traditional father figures—the priest, the lord, and the headman of the village—having been more or less sent packing, it is fatally easy for men to turn to a substitute like de Gaulle in a time of trouble and indecision. This is a favourite theme of those sociologists like Fromm who have written about the fear of freedom.

I am not, of course, suggesting that this loosening up of the old authorities is a bad thing. I am just making comparisons to bring out what is distinctive about authority as contrasted with other forms of social regulation. I am also suggesting that when science and morality develop and help to oust traditional forms of authority they do not simply replace it by more toler-

able forms of legal-rational authority. They also sometimes create a vacuum into which charismatic authority may be thrust. In a social system, as I have tried to show, there must be authority; the only question is what *sort* of authority there should be and what should be its bounds.

## *Living Without Authority*

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ONE of the most impressive changes that has come over our society in the past three hundred years has been a gradual one. It could be dramatically described as the rise of the fatherless society.

Up to the seventeenth century men were dominated by the figure of the father in all departments of life. In the family the father was a real patriarch and the sort of authority which he exerted over his children was mirrored in the authority of kings, bishops, lords, squires, and the Pope. Gradually, however, this patriarchal kind of authority has been passing away. Even in the face to face communities of the village and the small country town the squire and the vicar no longer meet with that total deference which was once their due. A more brotherly sort of society has grown up in which men take increasing responsibility for their own lives. Men rise in society more because of their ability than because of their birth, and women are not universally regarded as inferior simply because they are women.

This gradual change in people's attitudes is far more important than that brought about by any sudden revolution. But we are not finding it too easy. When we grow up and begin to stand on our own feet we often long for the security of our childhood days when our

parents made all the decisions. It is the same with society. When things prove difficult it is only too easy to return to the father in the form of a dictator, as many have done. Then there is also a tendency to find a *new* sort of man to take on this ancient patriarchal role. The old religious or political leaders no longer cut much ice with most of us as authorities; we treat the doctor, who looks after our bodies, or the psychiatrist who looks after our minds, with much more respect than the priest who looks after our souls. And we have become so disillusioned with politicians that we treat them with a certain degree of derision. This increased respect for the doctor is symptomatic; for in the minds of many the scientist has stepped into the place from which old authorities have been ousted. After all, it is now the scientist rather than the priest who knows about the mysteries of life—things like space travel, reconstructing living cells out of chemicals, mechanical brains that may replace human ones, and the alarming contents of our unconscious minds. And it is the scientist rather than the politician who delivers the goods—television sets, réfrigerators, soapless detergents and atomic bombs.

Many scientists seem only too glad to put on this mantle of authority. They make public pronouncements about peace and war; they mingle ethics with evolution and religion with astronomy; and, of course, our ears are ringing with scientific counsels about bringing up our children. The scientist in our community is in danger—and it is a danger—of becoming like Plato's philosopher king—not just an expert in a particular field of research like evolution or nuclear physics, but an expert on the good for society and for the individual. And how com-

forting for us to be able to pass on those tormenting problems about what we ought to do to the expert. Here is a new way of returning to the father, of exchanging the worries and responsibilities of adult life for the security of childhood, of staying mentally for ever in short trousers.

It is, indeed, rather ironical that the scientist should appear as a kind of authority. For science, like morality, is basically anti-authoritarian. And, as a matter of fact, the development of both science and morality are two of the most important features of the emergence of the more brotherly kind of society which has replaced the patriarchal sort.

A scientist, surely, is a man who acknowledges no authority. He gives up what is distinctive of his calling if he believes things just because somebody says that they are true. He believes that bodies fall at a certain rate to the ground not because Galileo or anyone else said so, but because the experiments can be performed which convince him that what Galileo said was true. In a scientific discussion it is essential to listen to the reasons a person gives for his beliefs and to ignore his personal or social oddities. We do not accept them just because they are *his* beliefs, or because he claims some kind of revelation or authority for them. Neither do we reject them just because we do not like the colour of his skin or his family connections. We must listen to the argument and ignore the man. This is what we call being reasonable or using our reason.

Of course some scientists come to be called 'authorities' on particular matters. But this only means that they have studied the subject closely and, in the past, have put forward theories that have been found to fir

the facts. In the same way we speak of reliable witnesses. With such people there is a strong presumption that they are talking sense on certain topics, but only a strong presumption. They may, after all, be wrong on this occasion in spite of their reputation. And, of course, outside their own sphere their opinion is no better than that of any other reasonable man who has had a different sort of training. A training in physics or phonetics does not, of itself, produce political pundits.

Morality has the same anti-authoritarian character as science and it is no accident that the two have developed together. Now by 'morality' I do not mean just doing the done thing or performing duties required by a religious or civil authority. For then there would be no distinction between custom, religion, law, and morality. I mean acting on a code that the individual has accepted as his own. We can believe that gambling is wrong just because we have been brought up that way. This is a matter of custom. Or we can believe that gambling is wrong because we have thought about it and seen that there are *reasons* against it. This use of 'morality' is a tightening-up of ordinary usage, which covers both customary and rational codes. But little depends on ordinary usage. Why, for instance, does 'immoral' suggest sex and selfishness, whereas 'unethical' suggests a breach of a professional code? Behind, however, these vagaries of ordinary usage lies a distinctive form of discourse in which words like 'ought' and 'good' occur. This differs from—e.g. the use of commands, because it suggests the backing of reasons. This backing can stop at an *arbitrary* point such as the mere appeal to a rule or to a backing for a rule like 'because others say so'. I am using 'morality' in the sense of a rational code because such a



code involves the development of that feature which makes morality in general distinct from law, etiquette, and religion—the implication of *reasons* for what is prescribed.

There is a further reason why it is especially incongruous to accept the scientist as an authority about what ought to be done. His job is to classify and explain facts: he only tells us what is the case and why it is so. He does not tell us what *ought* to be the case. A psychologist may tell us why children tend to steal, a social scientist about the causes of unemployment. But they cannot tell us as *scientists* that stealing or unemployment is *wrong*. Science is concerned with what is, morality with what ought to be. So, though a scientist can help us to clear our minds about what the facts are and what has caused them, he cannot, as a scientist, tell us what we ought to do about them. That is our responsibility as moral agents.

The distinction between what is and what ought to be gives us, too, an additional reason for rejecting the appeal to any sort of authority. If we say that: 'the psychologist says that I ought not to slipper my children'; or: 'the priest says that I ought not to divorce my wife', it is logically fallacious to conclude that I *therefore* ought to do neither of these things. For it is a *fact* that the psychologist says the first thing and the priest the second. And it only follows that we ought not to do these things if we *also* have accepted the principle that we ought always to do what the psychologist or the priest tell us we should do. Now, if we accept either of these authorities without question we are truly accepting an authority. But it is often the case that these so-called authorities disagree. Which then shall we

accept? If we put forward *reasons* for accepting one rather than the other, then we are not adopting a code that rests finally on authority. We have a reasoned code of a sort which involves a reasoned surrender to authority like that of the man who joins a party and promises always to toe the party line. Whether or not accepting such a provisional authority is consistent with our moral responsibility depends on whether we are prepared to admit that, on occasion, this provisional kind of authority may be wrong, and may have to be rejected.

Now some scientists might readily admit the logic of the matter as we have so far exhibited it; but they might say that a certain branch of modern science—psycho-analysis — has shown the argument advanced to be largely irrelevant. For psycho-analysis has revealed that we can never really get rid of the father. We take him into ourselves when we develop a ‘super-ego’ around about the age of four and what we call our conscience is, in the main, his forbidding voice which dictates our standards. We have, as it were, got rid of the patriarch in society but have set him up in our own minds.

In meeting this very subtle objection, it is first necessary to point out the ambiguity of the term ‘conscience’. It can be used in the context of what we have called customary morality, or doing the done thing. And no doubt the Freudian theory can take very good care of this sort of behaviour. But ‘conscience’ can also be used to refer to rational reflection on principles. Bishop Butler, for instance, defined ‘conscience’ as ‘a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions’. My account of morality presupposes the use of conscience in this

second sense and it is arguable that the Freudian theory has little relevance to it. This contention has support in the theory of the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget. For he maintains that children pass through stages in their attitude to rules, whether these are rules of games like marbles, or the rules which regulate society like those against theft and injury to others. At first, the rules seem to them to be externally imposed, emanating from the unquestionable authority of parents and teachers. Of course, they may not keep to the rules; they may cheat or follow their own inclinations. But they do not question the validity of rules. This is the stage of the formation of the Freudian super-ego. It is only later when they emerge into the gang stage that they begin to see that both sorts of rules depend on mutual consent and can be altered if they so decide. They see the *point* of rules and develop quite a different attitude to them. They do not altogether shed their early attitude to rules; in all of us, in varying degrees, our father's voice lives on. But a measure of autonomy is superimposed on this precipitate of parental prohibitions.

Piaget's distinction between the transcendental and autonomous stages of the child's development is as a matter of fact a paradigm of our social development. We have gradually emerged from the closed, traditional, patriarchal sort of society when our lives were governed almost entirely by external unquestionable authorities. Science and morality are two of the most important manifestations of this stage. And they are connected not because the scientist is a new authority to replace the old ones, but because they are both *anti*-authoritarian in character. This is perhaps rather a negative characterization of their relationship. But a

further elucidation of what it implies suggests a more positive connection.

Both science and morality, it has been argued, involve being reasonable or the use of reason. This does *not* mean the switching on of some sort of mental gadget which would enable us to split the atom, solve a crossword puzzle, or plan a murder. Extremely unreasonable people can do all these things. It means the determination to follow reasons and to disregard irrelevant considerations, or acting in accordance with certain procedures which are essential to discovering the truth. The rejection of the appeal to authority is the negative facet of the positive demand for the truth. This presupposes some kind of impartiality. Just because *I* say this or *you* say that, it need not be right. The use of reason demands that differences or distinctions should only be made when there are *grounds* for making them. Listening to the other fellow and disregarding irrelevant considerations like the tone of his voice or colour of his eyes, is essential to science or any other form of rational discussion. For why should *these* be grounds for listening or not listening to what he says? And reasonableness, in this general sense, is also essential to morality. For, in morality, we are dealing with practical rather than with theoretical reason; we are dealing with clashes of theories as in science. But morality makes a similar requirement of us—that we should consider the proposals under dispute with impartiality. We must not be swayed by considerations which are irrelevant to the issue — as, for example, people's height or physical attractiveness in deciding whether or not they should pay their debts. The immoral person is the one who says what is right for himself need not be right for somebody

else. He treats himself as a *privileged* person in the sense that he would not be prepared to accept the justification which he gives for himself acting in a certain way as valid for anyone else. His defence, in effect, is that it is all right for me simply because I am I. Number one must always come first. This is the plea of privilege and partiality, whereas the moral standpoint is that the claims of all who are involved should be assessed in terms of considerations that are relevant to the proposal put forward. When we try to pass on morality to children we say to them: 'How would it be if somebody else did this to you?', or 'How would it be if we all acted like this?' This is not only different from the appeal to privilege; it is also radically different from the authoritarian demand of: 'Don't do this because I say so'—which is, in effect, hindering them from being moral.

Impartiality in science and morality are manifestations of the most general requirement of reason, that distinctions should only be made where there are differences, that rules are rules and exceptions to them have always to be justified. This general principle can be seen at work in other institutions of our more brotherly sort of society. Equality before the law, for instance, requires that if a person falls into a particular legal category—for example, that of landlord or tenant—he shall not be deprived of what is due to him as a landlord or tenant because of irrelevant considerations such as his religion, height, or social upbringing. Verdicts must be returned in accordance with the evidence and not in accordance with the likes and dislikes of the judge and jury. The defendant and prosecution are allowed full facilities for stating their case so that a *reasonable* decision can be arrived at. Similarly, in Par-

liament, the Prime Minister cannot go down to the House and say: 'I am a great authority; listen to me and do what I say.' He has to give reasons for his policy. The pity is that so much political argument degenerates into abuse of the other side rather than being conducted in a reasonable manner.

Reasonableness, then, which involves impartiality, is the basis of science and morality and is at work in the legal and political institutions of our society. Is this all that can be said about the positive connection between science and morality? Not quite; for there is another very important aspect of the matter.

It is often said that our trouble today is that science has advanced, but our morality has not kept pace with our cleverness. We have developed understanding of the atom, of bacteria, and propaganda; but we are still wicked enough to use these discoveries to destroy each other and warp the minds and bodies of those who stand in the way of our personal, party or national interests. Science, we say, is too much the tool of those who put the pursuit of power and privilege before morality. And, no doubt, there is quite a lot in this thesis. It certainly serves to spotlight the point that I have stressed before—that what ought to be is not the lackey of what is. But the thesis is only partly true; for just as good a case can be made for saying that the reverse is also true—that we are far more moral than we were, but that we have not proved clever enough to keep up with it. This more unusual and less obvious thesis I will now elaborate.

Under the old patriarchal system men regarded codes of conduct and social institutions as imposed on them by some unquestionable external authority. Like

Piaget's children in their early years, they never doubted the *validity* of rules. They were handed down by tradition and were felt to be as much part of the universal order of things as the regularities of the seasons and tides. Every man had a place in society like the fish in the sea and the birds in the air. This social order seemed unalterable. Men therefore did not feel much responsibility for social practices and institutions which stunted the lives of so many. It is only with the rise of the fatherless society that men have come to realize that social practices depend on us and that we are responsible for our institutions. Age-old traditions have been challenged and, when looked at with some measure of impartiality, have been seen to favour the few at the expense of the many. Some of them were based on privilege and irrelevant considerations like those of birth. After all, why should a child be condemned to work in a mine at the age of nine years old, just because of an accident of birth? Or why should not the civil service be open to all, irrespective of their social upbringing?

This dawning realization of the alterability of institutions and of the unfairness of so many age-old traditions has brought with it a new sense of responsibility together with a great zeal for reform. Reforms of all kinds—political, social, medical and educational—have swept the country during the past hundred years. But our moral zeal has, in some ways, proved too much for our cleverness. For in human affairs well-meaning reforms have often unintended consequences which the reformers neither wished for, nor anticipated. For instance, sex equality seems a thoroughly desirable and moral objective; a great deal has been achieved towards

bringing it about in the past fifty years. Yet quite recently the secretary of the Marriage Guidance Council claimed that it is the biggest cause of divorce. 'It is the new equality of women with men,' he said, 'that really has shaken the stability of marriage and family life.' Now, this assertion does not entail that we should stop the movement for the equality of the sexes. It merely illustrates the thesis that a much-needed reform has brought in its train a lot of unintended consequences that its initiators were not clever enough to foresee.

This is where the scientist—especially the social scientist and psychologist—may be able to come to the rescue of our morality. For he tries to establish generalizations about the unintended consequences of our actions. Durkheim, for instance, suggested that if we improve the standard of education in a community, we also tend to increase the suicide rate. Now if this were true, it would be a very useful thing for us to know. What we did about it, of course, would still be up to us. But we would not be quite so impetuous in trying to improve things all at once. We would be more in the position of the doctor who wished to introduce sweeping medical improvements in an African territory and who was asked by the administrator: 'But tell me, how are you going to feed all the people you keep alive? We can't grow enough to support them and we can't afford any more imports.' The scientist in such cases does not tell us what we ought to do. But he does help us to make a more clear-headed and responsible decision for ourselves.

Morality can too often take the form of indignation and moralizing. This never gets us very far. It is more important to moralize less and *do* more about clearing



up the mess. But this we cannot do unless we understand why there is a mess. And in this the scientist again can help us. We are worried, for instance, about the amount of juvenile delinquency in our midst. If the psychologist tells us that its main cause is lack of maternal care in the early years, then we know the sort of thing to do in order to improve things. The scientist may also be able to tell us that certain methods of clearing up the mess may lead to a worse one which we do not intend.

There is a sense in which human progress has been the substitution of one form of misery for another. We have got rid of most of the injustices and sources of misery of the patriarchal society. But the methods we have adopted have brought in their train miseries of a different kind. Loneliness and the feeling that we do not belong anywhere, for instance, were not social problems in the Middle Ages as they are today. Yet these miseries are in part the product of the centralization of authority which was necessary to remove many of the injustices of the past. In getting rid of old forms of misery we have often opened up new forms, and even new possibilities of misery.

Yet is it not better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied? To be able to love another person is also to expose oneself to depths of misery that a man who can never love can never dream of. But would we therefore give up our capacity for love? Men once suffered in this country because there was little freedom of thought. But freedom of thought, though exhilarating, can also make us very unhappy. Would we then give it up? A certain degree of discontent is the penalty we pay for evolving from the apes. But much of it could be averted with a little informed foresight. It is possible that science

—especially the sciences of man—may gradually provide this sort of foresight. In time we may well become wiser to the unintended consequences of our well-meaning reforms and may thus save ourselves from too ham-handed applications of our moral code.

In this partnership between science and morality the scientist's role is not that of an authority. Indeed his advice serves to increase the range of our responsibility rather than to relieve us of it. For if the scientist can tell us what the causes of juvenile delinquency are, he can also tell us how people can be conditioned so as to behave like men in 1984. Responsibility implies that we know what we are doing. Thus the more we know the probable effects of our ways of dealing with children, the greater is our responsibility in relation to them. The scientist, who has so often looked like a new authority on whose shoulders we could cast our responsibilities, has turned out instead to have increased their range. Our danger is that, having killed the father, we may feel overburdened by our responsibilities and set up the son in his place.

## *Authority and the Family*

IT IS often said that we are witnessing a widespread breakdown of authority. We hear stories of young people out of control—stampedes in the Blackboard Jungle, parents ignored or defied, and even the London policeman treated with scant respect. Gone, it might be argued, is the authority of the face to face leader. It is not parents, parsons or teachers who have any authority nowadays; if anyone has, it is those charismatic figures who appear for brief half-hours framed in the screen on the family hearth-rug. The parents just turn the knobs—if they have sufficient authority left to manage even that. Trust, faith, obedience—all those attitudes appropriate to authority—have either been shrugged off or dissipated in a diluted form towards some central synthetic substitute. Big brother will soon be with us.

Generalizations such as these are good opening gambits for intelligent discussion, like questions to a Brains Trust. But, like caricatures, they may too by their very exaggeration draw attention to features of a situation too familiar for us to notice. The features which I have in mind are those of the changed face of authority which has now become washed clean by morality and overshadowed by power.

It was in the seventeenth century that Englishmen began seriously to ask the question 'Why should some

men be in authority over others?' Up to that time authority had been predominantly of what Max Weber called the traditional type. The right to command derived from traditions stretching back into time immemorial. There is no time to sketch the complex fusion of economic and religious currents which crumbled away the solid structure of the old patriarchal order. It is sufficient to say that a new Leviathan loomed which combined an emphasis on individuality with a more highly centralized authority structure. And a new conception of authority developed to replace the sway of tradition. Many philosophers have ridiculed the contract theory of the seventeenth century, which was the dramatic device for insisting that government must be by the consent of the governed. But in concentrating on absurdities of detail they have missed the main bite of the theory, which was the demand that some sort of *rational* justification must be given for authority. The purposes for which it was to be exercised should be made clear and moral limits set to its exercise. For the contract theorists like Hobbes or Locke the appeal to tradition or to Divine Right was pernicious and mystifying moonshine. They disagreed about what the function of the state was and about the particular grounds which made authority legitimate. But they were united in thinking that *some sort of rational* grounds must be given for the authority of man over man.

From then onwards emerged gradually what Weber called legal-rational authority. When we want to insult it we call it bureaucracy. Competence is its keynote. Officers are appointed because of their competence in relation to the function of the institution, and they have a sphere of competence for the exercise of their

authority. We are so used to constitutions and rules for organizations that we forget the silent revolution that has gradually changed the face of authority. Nowadays, for instance, we regard a king as a person with a job to do—and not a very enviable one at that. This would have been an impossible attitude for a sixteenth-century Englishman. Rulers are either elected or appointed by public examination. This seems to us obviously fair—a sensible way of doing things. And authority is not resented much when those in authority are appointed for their competence and have a clearly defined job to do. But we forget that it was only in Gladstone's time that competitive examinations were introduced for the civil service and that at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was an established practice for people to enter politics by patronage and bribery.

It is often said that the liberal conception of the state as a necessary convenience for limited purposes like that of protection is outmoded. For the state, it is argued, has taken over so many functions previously discharged by other bodies that it is beginning to appear as an all-providing father. This could happen, of course; Big Brother might be round the corner. But at the moment the father image does not fit very well. A more appropriate image is that of a vast bank on which the individual thinks that he has a right to an almost unlimited overdraft. If the extension of state functions is sapping individual initiative and responsibility, it is not because the old patriarchal picture of authority is returning; for public life is becoming increasingly depersonalized. It is rather the prevalence of the ideology of hire-purchase, where much can be had from a central pool for small sacrifices. Fairness is the keynote; and

fairness is the cry of brother to brother, not of son to father. Doctors, teachers, and social service workers are not treated with reverence as part of a patriarchal system. They are often regarded as public servants with a job to do; and woe betide them if they are lax or inefficient in dispensing the public chest.

This development of a more rational attitude towards authority has been accompanied by the spread of rationality into spheres previously regulated by authority or tradition. Morality, as distinct from mere customary conformity, has emerged. Duties, like those of thrift, temperance, and truthfulness are discussed in rational terms; people just don't do the done thing or follow the edicts of a religious authority. They disagree widely, often on rational grounds, about matters like gambling, smoking, race-relations and sexual conduct. Grandparents reared in Victorian times find this disturbing. There are many who feel that they are living in an alien world and complain that the young have no principles. What they often mean is that young people insist on thinking out their own principles.

There is also the phenomenon which I have spoken about briefly before—the enormous increase in power made possible by the development of science, which has dwarfed the importance of authority as a technique of social control. Coercion on a large scale by terrifying weapons and mass influence by propaganda and other irrational means sprawl across our social consciousness. It is significant that so few films and novels display a fascination for authority. They display a preoccupation with power in its primitive and developed forms. And what is opposed to power is usually moral integrity, not the rule of law. *Shane*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Philip Mar-*

lowe in Chandler's stories, the heroes of *On the Waterfront*, *Manhunt*, and *A Man is Ten Feet Tall*—these represent the struggle for decency against naked power. In horror films and science fiction there are grotesque pictures of the unleashing of power; war films emphasizing brutality and 'X certificate' films suppurating with sex and violence squirt out of the id of the film industry. It is rare that one comes across novels like those of C. P. Snow where there is a fascination for the problems of those in authority, from the point of view of those on the inside. Authority, of course, often appears; but it is subjected to rational, quizzical scrutiny—usually from the point of view of those who suffer from it. The asininities of officialdom were part of the stock-in-trade of Ealing studios. And the professor in *Lucky Jim* would scarcely fit into the common room of *The Masters*. Authority, too, often is projected abroad or in the services. But here, as in *The Quiet American* or *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, it appears with a question mark against it. And as for sagas about family loyalty and authority—these seem part of a bygone age. Parents usually appear as people for the young to rebel against or to blame for their own shortcomings. And those, like Ivy Compton Burnett, who write about the family, usually project it lovingly into the past.

And this brings me to the family. For it is my conviction that although we have a more rational way of looking at the authority of the state, we are still confused about authority in the family. It is easy for us to take a tolerably rational attitude to those in civil authority because the state has obvious functions to perform like the protection of life and property and the provision of public services. But with the family our situation is not

comparable. The trouble is not just that we are bound to it by irrational bonds of love and loyalty and by our deep-seated needs for sex and security. It is also that the extensions of state functions, to which I have referred, have been largely at the expense of the family. And a rational form of authority is only possible where there are palpable and important jobs to be done for which some men have to take the rap. In industry it has been found that the giving of orders is only tolerable under modern conditions if they are made impersonal and related to specific tasks. But the family has lost so many of its tasks. Today the only activities left to it are sexual relations, the care of young children, cooking, and the maintenance of a household. Farming, home industries, education, and religious ritual have gone out; even cooking and child-care have partly been taken over by other bodies. Furthermore the kinship extensions so characteristic of traditional family life have diminished with increasing social mobility. The myriads of relations first left the household and then the district.

This diminution in the functions and extent of the family has coincided with the rise of the ideology of intimacy and one hundred per cent compatibility. Personal choice rather than family arrangement is the criterion of continuity. And when the dream of romantic love, fostered by the film and novel, has faded, as fade it must, all that is left is sex, companionship, and the care of children and household. Not that this is not enough to get on with; but personal choice has put a premium on personal compatibility, and so many of the activities of the family have to be contrived. In the old days they were not contrived; they were given. There was so much more to do than just be 'adjusted', keep the



house in repair (and pay for it), arrange a holiday, and bring up the children.

Furthermore modern marriage has become irrevocably *moralized*. Before women achieved some sort of equal status with men the norms for behaviour within marriage were prescribed by custom; personal adjustments had always to be made, but they were within a framework of fixed traditions. Nowadays couples have, in a certain sense, to make their own marriage. The norms have to be reached by agreement as well as temperamental adjustments arrived at. Matters of principle can arise over the washing-up as well as over family finance. Indeed a key question to ask, as a guide to the structure of a given family, is the one about the family budget.

The net result of these changes is both a decrease in the importance of the family as a social institution, and a change in the structure of authority in the family. In the old Victorian middle class family tradition upheld the right of the man to command, and also power, which, as I have argued before, may well be a necessary condition for the exercise of authority, was on his side as well. I don't mean just the power to coerce by physical strength; I mean also economic power. But nowadays the woman often brings money into the house and has a real alternative of earning elsewhere if the man's attitude is more than she can stomach. This has transformed the authority structure. So too has the growth of morality which has made the giving of orders based on a patriarchal tradition, and the making of unilateral decisions, seem an indignity within the framework of marriage.

This uneasy *modus vivendi* between husband and

wife is bound to have repercussions on the children, not only in the broken homes which so often result but also in the anxiety about authority which is generated. And in relation to authority over the children the situation is equally uneasy. Symptomatic of this uneasiness is the suggestion by the Oxford philosopher, Richard Hare, not long ago, that many of the dark places in ethics might be illuminated if philosophers would address themselves to considering the question 'How should I bring up my children?' This might be interpreted as a request to get clearer either about the *justification* of rules by seeing which ones should be passed on to children growing up in a time of rapid social change, or about the appropriate techniques for passing on such rules, whatever they happen to be. I think that there is a lot of bewilderment on both aspects of this question, some of which erupted into the popular press when Margaret Knight gave her talks on religious education a few years ago. People slither into parenthood without much thought or preparation. For years they wobble uncertainly between regurgitating the old recipes on which they were brought up and thinking the thing out for themselves in a more rational manner. Should they use rational instruction? If so, at what age and about what? Or should they rely on authority—the giving of orders, often with the rider 'Because I say so'? Should they use reward and punishment? And when should they resort to pure power in the form of threats and coercion? Or should they trust that children will pick up most things by spontaneous imitation?

This bewilderment is enhanced by the widespread diffusion of enough psychological speculation to make parents worried about what they are doing to their

children but not enough established laws to settle most of the matters under discussion. There is also the widespread self-consciousness of parents about their relationships with each other and with their children. Anyone who dips into women's magazines will know the sort of thing that I mean. This may well be because the family's functions are now so greatly reduced and a premium is placed upon personal relationships. In the old days when the father was at home, say on a farm, and when the son learnt the family trade alongside the father, there was little time or occasion for such self-consciousness.

It followed, too, that there was little doubt about the authority of parents over children. For there was the tradition and the common task. And orders are not so resented when they arise from the demands of a situation rather than from the whims of a man. In the modern family the situation is very different; for the tasks have diminished and those that are left are so often referred to slightly as 'chores'.

Of course whatever parents think of their status, in the eyes of their children they are bound to appear, in the early years at any rate, as authorities of the traditional type, with perhaps a touch of the charismatic about them. But the question is what happens when the children's interests turn outwards, when they develop loyalties of a horizontal sort, and when they acquire technical knowledge and skills beyond the ken of their parents. Do the parents then try to retain their right to command along traditional lines? Or do they try to relate their authority to clearly understood tasks, and wean their children to an understanding of a more rational type of authority? Above all is there a

consistent attitude towards the exercise of authority?

It is a surprising thing that we now regard it as quite natural for adolescents to rebel against their parents. In Victorian times such a revolt, when it occurred, meant guilt for the adolescent and shock and shame for the parent. And the opportunities for such a revolt, which adolescents now regard as more or less their right, have been magnified by high wages, and the growth of horizontal teen-age groupings. Adolescents, it is claimed, are now a social problem. Very recently a Royal Commission has been appointed to look into the position of the Youth Services. Understandably so; for the rise in juvenile delinquency has coincided with the pressing need for more technicians. But the trouble may be too deep-seated to be settled simply by providing further facilities for adolescents. It reflects, surely, the shift that has taken place in the functions and authority structure of the modern family.

It might well be contended that a more rational attitude towards authority in the family cannot be developed unless it recovers some of its old functions and increased importance is given to its existing ones. Old people, who are going to live longer and longer, need not spend their last years as querulous outcasts in state homes. Town planning could provide facilities for them in neighbourhood units which would permit such extended kinship relations. The old extended family might be revived to alleviate loneliness and the need to belong somewhere which are acute social problems, even if they are not as dramatic as those of adolescence. The return of the grandmother and maiden aunt to the vicinity could be a boon to married couples harassed by problems of baby-sitters at night and domesticity during

the day-time, which so often has to be combined with the wife's work. The child himself, too, although needing the care of the mother and father during the early years, might benefit from a relaxation of the intense emotional involvement of the small self-contained self-conscious family unit.

Whether such a rehabilitation of the family is possible is difficult to say. But it could only be made to look at all feasible if something fairly drastic is done about the institution of marriage. It is a strange anomaly that in this country we make it easy to get married but difficult to get divorced without going through some farcical exhibition of adultery. If we become convinced that, for the sake of the children and the aged, it should be difficult to break up a marriage, we should also make it more difficult to get married and put more emphasis on the vital jobs that the family has to do. Why should not the period of intention to get married be lengthened, for instance? Why should we be permitted to slip into marriage so swiftly and exuberantly? If the institution is to play an important part in the modern world, it will have to be rationalized. And that might involve a bit of hard thought about entrance qualifications. It might be said that this would be an intolerable intrusion into the private life of the individual. Perhaps. But we have it already—after marriages have broken down. Of course we might well have to revise our attitudes to pre-marital sex-relations too. But maybe these need a bit of revision anyway.

These suggestions may sound a bit fanciful. But my point is that if the family is to be rehabilitated it must be rationalized and stripped of much of the aura of muddled tradition and religiosity which still surrounds

it. Its functions must be seriously thought about and marriage itself must be treated as a serious social institution that cannot be entered into in an exhilarated trance and terminated by scenes which are reminiscent of comic opera.

Others might argue that it is impossible to rehabilitate the family; for it would involve going against all the trends of the times towards mobility, easy interchange of homes and jobs, and larger scale social groupings. We should follow the pattern of America by making marriage easy to contract into and easy to contract out of. The state should provide homes for the aged, large-scale youth organizations for adolescents, and a universal extension of the nursery school. The process of the state taking over all the important functions of the family would then be completed. Married couples could enjoy sex and companionship together. The home would become a dormitory and the functions of the family would be in the hands of those specially qualified to discharge them.

These look like the logical alternatives. But whichever way things go there is a sobering thought which must go with us. This is that psychologists have established that it is in the early years that lasting attitudes to authority are laid down. Whilst the family is in its present limbo of uncertainty it may well be that we are turning out adults who will have an even less clear and consistent attitude towards authority than we have ourselves and who will be even less capable than their parents of raising children with a sane attitude towards authority. For while we are ourselves in a muddled frame of mind it is difficult for us, as parents, to exercise authority in a consistent way. And it is probably the

inconsistency of parents rather than their consistent severity or lack of it which does so much to make the development of a sane attitude difficult.

This analysis might seem depressing; but it should not be so regarded. For it is only a further example of the general thesis advanced before—that social progress brings in its train all sorts of unintended consequences that we are not always clever enough to foresee. Their have, from the point of view of morality and happiness, been enormous gains in the development of modern family life—honesty and frankness in personal relationships, the spread of tolerance and the decrease of hypocrisy, and the ruling out of *irrelevant* grounds for treating women and children differently from men. The intimacy and companionship, which is the ideal of modern marriage, is itself something new and of inestimable value. This almost goes without saying. My intention has not been to dwell on such palpable gains—only to point out some of the unintended consequences in relation to the structure and exercise of authority in the family. To this extent my analysis has been somewhat of a caricature. But it is to be hoped that it may draw attention to some of the furrowed features of authority's changing face. It is a much *fairer* face—but at a cost.





## PART II

### FREUD, MARX AND RESPONSIBILITY







Something like this can happen on a large scale. A nation or a social class may come into being, not because such things grow naturally like rooks, or rabbits, but because the word goes round that men belong to them; and by acting as if they are parts of nations or classes men bring them into being. Social beliefs father social realities.

It is a widespread malaise fostered by half-truths that I wish to consider. Its symptoms can be encountered in all walks of life. A girl in a remand home says to the probation officer: 'It's no good doing anything for me, miss; you see, I come from a broken home.' 'Mixed-up kids' pursue their erratic and erotic course through the gorgeous Eastman Color of the new psycho-Westerns. And at some point, usually, their course is halted under a tree or beside a brook. The hero tells the sympathetic but bewildered girl that it all goes back to the moment when he realized that he was all alone. Grown men mumble lazily and hazily that they began to drift away from religion when they read somewhere that God was a substitute for their father. And angry young men, who have not made the grade in the welfare state, sit for hours on a West End stage disclaiming their responsibility for their failure. Their parents, they say, either ignored or pampered them. Or they were just humdrum and failed to appreciate their offspring's latent genius. Society is at fault—whatever happens. It ostracizes the unusual, like themselves, and encourages mediocrity. Respectability, they say, is a bourgeois business; decency the drab deposit of a public-school education. Small wonder that men take to crime. And if they do, who is to blame them? For crime is a form of disease. Criminals suffer from lack of social conditioning

just as lethargic people may suffer from thyroid deficiency.

Such examples of a contemporary malaise could be multiplied indefinitely. Their common feature is a denial of responsibility coupled with a story about the causes of actions and standards. Sufferers from this malaise are victims of their own beliefs; for, in fact, they are less responsible because they believe they are. The dark recesses of class and childhood have provided them with a gift of a get-out. They do not simply diagnose their condition like the nursery-school child who said 'I'm maladjusted; I eat too many sweets.' No; they justify, or excuse, their failure to take responsibility for their own lives by an appeal to causes. The 'mixed-up kid' says that he cannot help trying to strangle his girlfriend because his mother rejected him, or preferred his younger brother, or something like that. Perhaps he cannot help it . . . perhaps. But the more strongly he believes that he cannot help it, the less likely will he be able to help it. His belief may foster a reality. But my contention is that there are usually, in fact, very poor grounds for this sort of belief. He is 'mixed-up' about Freud as well as about a number of other things. A half-truth has helped to bring about or to confirm him in his malaise.

We must beware of rushing headlong to the other extreme of thinking that men are personally responsible for everything brought about by their actions. Some men burden themselves with too great a sense of responsibility. They torture themselves for not being saints, seers, or supermen. They suffer from a malaise just as much as those who blame everyone except themselves for what they are. For there are occasions when it would

be reasonable to say that a man cannot help doing something. Common sense and the law have usually admitted to exonerating and extenuating circumstances. We would not blame a man if he took our silver while he was sleepwalking or if he took someone else's hat by mistake from a cloakroom, believing that it was his own. There was much talk, too, in the recent report of the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment, about the irresistible impulse. But these, we might say, are unusual cases. Men seldom act in ignorance or in their sleep; not all impulses are irresistible. There is a presumption in favour of men being usually responsible for their actions, and the fact that we single out such odd cases for special consideration suggests that we believe that in general men can help doing what they do.

But those who suffer from this contemporary malaise extend the class of such odd cases indefinitely. They think, so it seems, that they have only to produce a cause for a man's action in order to show also that he could not help doing what he did. Marx and Freud made some brilliant speculations about such causes. They also believed in determinism—at least in the sense that they believed that all actions have causes. But I do not think that they thought that by revealing such causes they were always also showing that men could not help doing what they in fact do. Yet the impression I have is that their too-facile converts believe that they did. I do not suppose many of these converts have read the canonical writings of Marx and Freud any more than many other so-called converts have read the Bible. They take convenient skimmings from these otherwise indigestible tomes as texts to exonerate their social non-

conformity. Freud might well have remarked like Kant of Fichte. 'May God protect us from our friends. From our enemies we can try to protect ourselves.'

Still, as often, there are important half-truths concealed in these distortions and exaggerations. Marx certainly, and perhaps Freud, too, were a bit unguarded about their concept of determinism in that they did not distinguish clearly finding causes in general from finding the particular sorts of causes that lead to unavoidable effects. And certainly Freud did produce some cases where actions have causes of such a kind that a man may be said to be driven to act, so that we really could say of him: 'He cannot help doing what he does.' But most of the causes he unearthed do not lead to such unavoidable effects. Freud's discoveries did not in fact provide us with a blank cheque drawn on the Bank of Exonerating Circumstances.

Indeed my view is that, in general, a revelation of the causes of our actions should increase rather than decrease our responsibility for them. Suppose, for instance, that we tend to be excessively hard on people who spend money unwisely or who flirt with gay abandon. We learn from Freud that often we condemn in others those things which we very much wish to do ourselves. Does this excuse our condemnation? Surely not. Indeed, a glimpse of what is latent in us may help us to modify our reactions to others. If we become able to recognize wishes and impulses in ourselves of which we were previously unaware, we are not *ipso facto* confronted with irresistible impulses. Indeed, coming to recognize them in ourselves may be one of the conditions necessary for resisting them.

Responsibility for our actions is not a positive state

for which we can make a list of positive criteria. We only ask whether a person is responsible for an action when there is a question of blaming or punishing him and when we want to rule out certain typical negative conditions, such as ignorance of fact, or acting under compulsion or duress. Our concept of responsibility, in other words, is defined by contrast against such typical exonerating circumstances. But if a person believes—as those suffering from this contemporary malaise appear to do—that all actions have causes and that once we can point to a cause for our acts we can use it as an excuse for our behaviour, this has two unfortunate effects—one logical and the other practical.

The logical effect would be that concepts such as 'could help' could never have application. We now talk of a man being responsible for his actions because there are some occasions when the plea of exonerating circumstances cannot be sustained. Our language has developed in no haphazard way; and it presupposes commonsense criteria for deciding whether men can help doing what they do. The onus lies with those who wish to establish that in a particular case or under particular circumstances a man cannot help doing what he does. But if the plea of exonerating circumstances can always be sustained, because it is always possible to unearth some cause for the man's action, then it would be pointless to talk either of 'could help' or of 'couldn't help'—a distinction which is a vital one for common sense and which arises from our common experience of different types of cases.

The 'mixed-up kid' who says that he cannot help trying to strangle his girl-friend is merely enunciating an otiose truism if he works out the implications of his



assumptions, though the very words he uses suggest that on some occasions at least he can help doing what he does. For as it is always possible to produce causes for his actions, and as, on his view, causes are as good as exonerating circumstances, the assumptions which lead him to excuse himself make the distinction between 'can help' and 'can't help' an otiose one in practice.

The practical effect of treating all causes as excuses is a witness to the power of social beliefs to beget social realities. The belief, in this case, may be ill-founded and may involve logical oddities. Nevertheless it may have a powerful influence on the minds of men. We might put the matter like this: a necessary condition of people being responsible is that they should believe that they are. We can help doing things provided that, at least, we think we can.

If the word goes round that people cannot help doing things because of their class or their upbringing, their conditioning in the carry-cot or some such thing—then they may tend to sit about like the angry young men, blaming everyone but themselves, but doing nothing about their condition. Their plight illustrates neatly the contention with which I began: that a social malaise can be the product of half-truths and of intellectual confusion.

That is not *merely* the product of such confusion is obvious enough to anyone who reflects on social development. Indeed the usual diagnosis of such a malaise has to do with such things as wars, weapons and the welfare state. That is why it is worth stressing this intellectual source of a malaise.

My aim in the next two talks is therefore to clarify and comment on the doctrines of Freud and Marx

which may have encouraged such confusion. My purpose is not to preach a sermon in order to establish Heracleitus' old claim that character is destiny; rather it is the more limited and pedestrian one of questioning the modern assumption that we are destined to have a certain sort of character.



collapse, says Marx, for there is a definite pattern in the affairs of men, an economic reality beneath the social appearances. The decisions of men, their laws, and political institutions, are but corks bobbing on the inexorable tide of technological advance. A man like Marx, who studies the economic trends of a society, does not just predict what is likely to happen under specified conditions; he claims to prophesy what *must* happen. He can disclose a society's destiny.

Marx was led to this strange view partly because he was a determinist—like many nineteenth-century thinkers—and confused two quite distinct beliefs under the general heading of 'determinism'. The first is the belief that all events—including human actions—have causes; the second, that if events have causes, they must also be unavoidable. I do not wish to dwell on the first belief, though I am prepared to say that I do not think that, in the case of typically human actions involving reason and deliberation—granted that they have causes—that a knowledge of their causes alone is sufficient to explain them. I would want to distinguish carefully between causes proper such as movements of the body and brain, and things like deliberating, deciding, having reasons, understanding truths, etc., which are often also called 'causes'. My view is that only when explanations of the second sort break down or have no application can causes of the first sort be sufficient to account for the happening in question. My concern is rather with the second belief—the alleged coincidence between causal explicability and unavoidability. This belief was due, to a certain extent, to the climate of opinion in the seventeenth-century days of the rise of science. The development of causal theories went

hand in hand with the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and the metaphysical picture of the world as a vast clock. The scientist, in developing his causal theories, revealed either the details of God's plan for his puppets, or the springs and levers which pushed men willy-nilly towards their destiny.

Marx inherited these metaphysical assumptions, though he clothed them in nineteenth-century trappings. Historical evolution, working according to the trinitarian pattern of the dialectic—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—took the place for him of Divine Providence. The springs and levers appeared in the form of the productive forces of the underlying economic engine which drives men towards their destiny. Marx enriched our understanding of history by his stress on the economic causes of change. But in his theory the huddling together of causal explicability and unavoidability under the umbrella of determinism persisted. And it still persists. Yet if you tell a man that his actions have causes, he will say: 'Yes, of course'. But if you tell him that his actions are causally determined, he will picture himself as a prisoner of Fate. He will not usually chide you for verbal redundancy.

Freud's concept of determinism was not influenced so much by a belief in destiny. He spoke of psychic determinism frequently; but mainly in order to stress that all actions—even those usually ascribed to chance or accident—in fact have some of their causes in the mind of the individual. And he made some brilliant speculations about the nature of some of these causes—unconscious wishes, for instance, which can be traced back to childhood. But he did tend to speak of these causes as mechanical pushes and pulls, as forces in the

depth of the unconscious which impel a man, willy-nilly, to behave in a bizarre manner. The impression of unavailability was conveyed, therefore, not because men were pictured as puppets dangling in the meshes of an unwinding historical pattern, but because they were prisoners pushed by the relics of their past.

There was little novelty in the suggestion that the child is the father of the man. But Wordsworth meant it as a compliment. Freud's suggestions, on the other hand, were far from flattering to man's esteem and feeling of security. They had an effect rather like Darwin's supposed claim that man is descended from the apes. For Freud taught that the child, with all his insistent wishes and fears, lives on in man's unconscious mind. Can a man be master of his fate if he is at the mercy of the child within him? Small wonder that many who were influenced by Freud pictured the growing boy building a prison-house for the adult.

These pictures of destiny and of the prison-house derived from Marx and Freud have had a subtle effect on notions of responsibility. For one of the grounds which exonerate a man from responsibility is the plea that he is the victim of compulsion. The usual cases are those of gross physical compulsion or, for example, where a man is forced to do something at the point of a pistol. The irresistible impulse is an extension of such cases. But the talk of economic forces beneath the social appearances, of wishes and impulses in the depths of the unconscious, suggested an indefinite extension of the concept of acting under compulsion. Could not men always be acting under a different, but equally irresistible sort of impulse?

As a matter of fact, they sometimes are. And this is

what makes so plausible the prisoner-of-the-past picture so often conveyed by determinism. For example, a man under post-hypnotic suggestion will generally do, when he wakes, what the hypnotist told him to do in his trance. He cannot be dissuaded or side-tracked by any rational arguments; indeed he will cook up all sorts of excuses for doing the most absurd things; he will truly act as if there is something in him which impels him to act in this way. In such cases it is reasonable to say that a man is not responsible for what he does. This is a model case of unavoidability. And it so happens, in this case, that we also know a cause of the man's behaviour.

But confusion enters in when this case is taken as being in any way typical, when the suggestion is made that there is impulsion simply whenever we know *some* of the causes, or that there is a necessary coincidence between causal explicability and unavoidability. This is surely absurd. We know that this is a case of impulsion because the man behaves so oddly when we try to get him to do something else, not because we know the causes of his behaviour. Very often, indeed, we speak of 'compulsives'—people who have an obsession about washing their hands or hoarding things, for instance—when we know nothing of the causes of their behaviour. The confusion in this story of causes comes from the failure to distinguish causes in general from causes which have effects which seem unavoidable in a limited range of circumstances. If a child lacks a mother's care, or changes its mother, for instance, at a certain stage in its development, it is claimed that it will later prove not just socially unreliable but unavoidably so—incapable of forming any lasting attachments. All the usual devices for changing character will be useless.

Such a person will indeed be a victim of his upbringing—or lack of it.

Freud, as is well known, developed a theory of character-traits in which he traced back traits like orderliness, parsimony, pedantry, and petulance to reactions to toilet training. Similarly sarcasm, scepticism, optimism, and so on, have been connected with reactions to weaning. But it has never been shown that such rather surprising causes of character always have unavoidable effects. Indeed, a person's character consists largely of those traits which the experience of generations of parents and school-teachers has found to be alterable. A boy is blamed or punished for his laziness, cowardice, selfishness, and dishonesty because it is believed—and with some justification—that praise and blame change his conduct. But his stupidity and lack of vitality receive different treatment. These are things that he really cannot help. We cannot alter them much by praise and blame, reward and punishment. The production of causes for such traits is irrelevant to the issue of responsibility unless the causes produced are of the sort which lead to unavoidable effects.

Once it is realized that only some, not all, causes count as exonerating circumstances the position with regard to responsibility looks very different. For now the 'mixed-up kid' can only appeal to social conditions or the dark corners of his childhood to exonerate him, if—and only if—there is good evidence to suppose that the causes connected with unalterable traits. And as psychologists have in fact produced very little evidence about such causes, we would do well to look back not just in anger but with a discriminating empirical eye.



Perhaps we might even look forward as well, and replace useless indignation by a more practical frame of mind. Perhaps we shall then see that Freud and Marx have in fact increased rather than diminished our responsibility. For there is less scope for the plea of ignorance to exonerate ourselves. There was a time when a parent could cheerfully lash a child with his tongue or belt, convinced that it was for the child's good; when a politician could regard social revolutions as acts of God; and when a man could regard stomach ulcers, headaches, and asthma as freaks of nature. But the time of such non-culpable ignorance is passing. And those who know enough about the causes of such phenomena to explain them frequently also know the sort of thing to do in order to put them right.

This is what makes nonsense of Marx's picture of the pattern of historical evolution. For by revealing the economic causes of social change he also revealed the points at which intervention could be effective to alter its course. Had the *laissez-faire* system of the middle of the nineteenth century persisted, there might well have been the collapse of capitalism which Marx prophesied. But those who developed the state as an instrument for intervening in economic affairs had learnt a good deal from Marx. His causal analysis had opened their eyes to the points at which there must be state intervention if his prophecies were to prove false. So there is a sense in which his prophecies were factors in preventing from happening what he prophesied would happen.

Marx, as a matter of fact, was—understandably—rather perplexed about the role of the intellectual *élite* who understood the way things were going. He did not think that they could alter the course of social change—

only shorten and soften the agony. Societies must die like other organisms. A social scientist was as helpless to prevent death as a doctor. Freud, on the other hand, made no such concessions to a belief in destiny. He dealt with real patients, not with hypothetical organisms. In his practical work as an analyst he assumed that some people could be cured. But, in his view, the individual himself had to do most of the work. And a necessary condition of such a change was that the individual should come to understand the causes of his behaviour. For only by doing so could he come to control it. Freud's aim as an analyst was to get people to stand on their own feet and to take more responsibility for their own lives, and not to escape it on pretexts dug out of their childhood reminiscences. The last thing he intended was to provide a universal get-out.



The theory becomes much less obvious if it is thought to apply to moral standards; for by morality, as distinct from tradition or custom, I do not mean just doing the 'done' thing—what our parents or associates have told us. I mean conforming to standards which we have thought about before accepting them as our own.<sup>1</sup> A reasoned decision not to smoke, because of its demonstrated effects, is different from an irrational objection to smoking, handed on from father to son. Freud's theory of conscience, which he called the 'super-ego', seems to account for the stage when children feel irrational guilt about breaking rules that are externally imposed and whose validity they do not question. None of us altogether lose our childhood attitude to rules. But if by moral standards we mean those that we adopt because we see the point of them rather than merely as a result of our upbringing or class, it should follow that the causal theories of Marx and Freud do not in any way undermine our responsibility for them. After all, if a belief has good grounds to support it, there is little point in speculating about its causes. The wrongness of breaking promises is unaffected by the fact that our feeling of guilt about breaking them may have causes. Indeed it would be surprising if it had not. The point is whether, whatever our parents say, it is wrong to break promises. We, as moral beings, have to decide and stand by our decision. That is where our responsibility comes in. If there are, in general, good reasons for keeping promises—as there obviously are—and someone suggests that our duty to keep them was drummed into us at a public school, or at our mother's knee, the appro-

<sup>1</sup> See back, pp. 28, 9.

prate answer is: 'So what?' or: 'How thoughtful of them'.

But the matter is not as simple as this. If Freud and Marx had provided merely a rather laboured glimpse into the obvious origins of customary conduct, they would not have done so much to encourage the belief that we are not responsible for our standards. They were both well aware that men develop arguments and systems of thought to justify their conduct and they sometimes use the words 'ideology' and 'rationalization'<sup>1</sup> to describe such arguments. Both these terms made, as it were, double-barrelled suggestions; for they implied that there was something suspect about the justification, and that this could be detected by looking at the causal realities beneath the appearances. It was significant, Marx thought, that the Puritan gave religious reasons for adopting the virtues of thrift, hard work, enterprise, and respect for property—all of which were essential for furthering his economic interests. The Liberal, too, extolled liberty; like John Stuart Mill he might even write an impassioned and elaborate defence of it. But, said Marx, these arguments were a façade which hid the economic necessity of the exploiting class to be unhampered in their economic expansion. The Liberal was not necessarily a hypocrite—merely the victim of economic forces which he could neither understand nor control.

Freud had a similar view of the contrast between the

<sup>1</sup> Before his death Ernest Jones wrote to me pointing out that Freud, so far as he knew, had not used the term 'rationalization'. I replied that what he said about 'idealization' in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* showed at least that he had the concept even if he did not use the term. Jones, of course, was quite right, for he himself introduced the term in his *Rationalization in Everyday Life* in 1908.

façade and the reality, namely: man's primary necessity to defend himself against threats from his own insistent wishes. To satisfy these—even to voice them—might call down disapproval, punishment, or worse upon his head. So he dealt with them by taking into himself his parents' prohibitions: what Freud called a reaction-formation. Or he might rationalize his conduct; compromise with these dangerous wishes by satisfying them under the cloak of socially acceptable reasons. Justice, said Freud, is such an excuse. We defend our social arrangements by stressing the importance of fair shares for all. But, so Freud claimed, underlying this type of justification is the insistence that, as we cannot get all we want for ourselves, others shall not have more than we do. More obvious examples, perhaps, would be that of the schoolmaster who cloaks his sadism with the theory that corporal punishment usually has beneficial effects; or the claim often imputed to Henry VIII that he was only interested in producing an heir; or the plaintive cry of the girl in trouble: 'He seduced me.'

These theories imply that justifications are merely excuses for what we are going to do anyway. This sort of explanation, or exposure, of people's protestations is, no doubt, often relevant and salutary. But the mistake is to assume that it is always relevant. Of course people are *sometimes* obsessed or driven by hidden fears and wishes to adopt various beliefs. But it only seems relevant to probe into these causes when they hold their beliefs against all the evidence—like the obsessive who believes that his hands are dirty—or when they cling passionately to beliefs for which no reason could possibly be produced. The causes of a belief must be distinguished from its grounds; and it seems only relevant to

speculate about causes when there are no grounds.

Indeed a very strong case can be made for saying that typical Freudian explanations are not of human *actions*, of what human beings do deliberately, knowing what they are doing and for which they can give reasons. Freud's brilliant discoveries were not of the causes of *actions* like signing contracts or hitting mashie-niblick shots; rather they were of things that *happen* to a man like dreams, hysteria, and slips of the tongue or pen. If a man has a reason for what he does which is convincing, like a chess-player who takes a bishop in order to check-mate the king, or a golfer who takes a wedge to pitch over a bunker and stop the ball dead on the green, there is no need for a special explanation in terms of unconscious wishes. It is only when he is not acting with reason at all (as in his dreams), or when he makes a slip in some performance (as in slips of the tongue, hand, or memory), or when there is something *phoney* about the reason which he gives for what he is doing, that Freud's special explanations seem relevant.<sup>1</sup>

We have, as a matter of fact, plenty of common-sense tests for deciding whether a person is merely giving a rationalization, or whether his standards are an ideology—to use the Marxist jargon. We confront him with arguments. If it could be shown for instance, in the case of corporal punishment, that in general little benefit to the boy resulted, and if the schoolmaster still advocated corporal punishment as a panacea for childhood aberrations, we would begin to say that his reasons were, in fact, rationalizations. It would be obvious that con-

<sup>1</sup> For elaboration of this point of view see Talk 10 on *The Psychologist and the Teacher*, and my *The Concept of Motivation* (Kegan Paul, 1958) Ch. 3.

siderations which were logically relevant to his belief in no way affected his belief. Here, as in the cases in my last talk of impelling causes, we are dealing with exceptional cases, with unalterable beliefs which are the products of certain sorts of causes. But it would be logically absurd to say that all beliefs were of this sort, that all principles were ideologies, all reasons rationalizations. For then this sort of distinction itself would never have application. It is only because people sometimes give genuine reasons for their beliefs, because they are sometimes prepared to change them in the light of logically relevant considerations, that there is point in talking of rationalizations—and of reasons. Terms like ‘rationalization’ and ‘ideology’, which cast aspersions on beliefs, are verbal parasites. They only flourish because common experience has provided hosts in the form of rational beliefs and genuine principles.

And just as in my last talk I showed that the mere production of causes by itself never establishes that a man is not responsible for his actions, so also it is obvious that the mere production of causes is never sufficient in itself to cast aspersions on a belief. A story from Arthur Koestler sums up my point rather neatly: Pythagoras, it is supposed, was drawing triangles in the sand. A friend came up and sat by him and Pythagoras said: ‘I don’t know why I keep on drawing these triangles. They worry me and fascinate me.’ His friend asked shrewdly: ‘What is your relationship like with your wife?’ Pythagoras looked a bit downcast and mumbled that he feared her affections were straying. ‘Aha!’ said his friend: ‘I now see why you can’t keep your mind off those triangles.’ ‘I suppose you are right,’ said Pythagoras. He then got up and did nothing fur-



ther about developing his theorem! Many a decent man has wanted to do something worth while but has had his confidence undermined by irrelevant remarks like: 'You only do it because you unconsciously need approval'—as if his unconscious had anything to do with the worthwhileness of what he intended.

Yet, as a matter of fact, I think that the last thing that Freud or Marx intended was to undermine morality or to suggest that men can never take responsibility for their standards. Both were rather puritanical men, demanding an unusually high standard of integrity from their colleagues and from themselves. They both shared the scientific humanism of the nineteenth century and thought that men could be freed, to a certain extent, from the forces which worked beneath the surface by coming to understand them. As Freud put it: 'We have no other means of controlling our instincts than our intelligence'.

Marx was opposed mainly to moralizing rather than to morality. He thought that preaching was not simply an ineffective way of dealing with evils but was a substitute for doing something about them. He distrusted the moral indignation of the bourgeois reformer; for he thought that his moralizing was a way of delaying the inevitable overthrow of bourgeois society. Doing something about evils meant, for Marx, understanding their economic causes and working to shorten and lessen the agony of an age that was passing. He believed ardently in the genuine principles of equality and fraternity which could flourish only when the system of exploitation of man by man had been replaced by the classless society. Admittedly, he was rather hazy about the distinction between ideologies and genuine principles. He

assumed some sort of connection between genuine principles and the practical scientific outlook; but he was not at all clear about what this connection was.

Freud was equally unclear in his conception of what he called 'the psychological ideal—the primacy of the intelligence'. Like Marx he thought that he could help people to shake off their servitude to the dark forces which possessed them by introducing them to the reality beneath the appearances. But he never worked out the precise relationship between this 'education to reality' and morality. Indeed, in a letter to a friend he confessed that he could subscribe to the maxim that 'what is moral is self-evident'. 'I believe,' he said, 'that in a sense of justice and consideration for others, in disliking making others suffer or taking advantage of them, I can measure myself with the best people I have known'. People who say that moral principles are self-evident often mean that no further reasons can be given for them. But perhaps they sometimes mean that the reasons for them are so obvious that they hardly need mentioning. Freud probably fell in this second category; for he stated that there were such good reasons for behaving decently that it was a pity to rest morality on a religious basis. In his view, there were not such good reasons for belief in God, and if people got wise to this and thought also that decency depended on a belief in God, they would—mistakenly—throw morality overboard with their religion.

Freud believed, above all things, in integrity and intelligence. His aim in analysis was not to deprive people of standards or to explain them away, but to bring people to choose their own. By revealing the infantile sources of many of the demands people made

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on themselves and on others, he was able to help them to stand on their own feet and to take responsibility for their own lives. The burden of the message of both Marx and Freud was that a man who understands the causes of social evils and personal predicaments is in a position to do something about them. Understanding paves the way for action as well as for sympathy. Neither of them would have had much sympathy for those who, understanding such causes, merely look back in anger.



# PART III

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION



## *Must an Educator Have an Aim?*

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MANY in recent times have blamed philosophers for neglecting their traditional task in relation to education. For, in the old days, it is argued, philosophers explained what the good life and the good society were; and this provided aims for educationists. But nowadays, as Sir Richard Livingstone put it, we are lacking in a knowledge of the 'science of good and evil'. I think that most modern philosophers would claim that, in this respect, they had advisedly neglected their traditional task, for the very good reason that they have become clearer about what their task as philosophers is. The so-called 'revolution in philosophy' of the twentieth century has been largely a matter of becoming clearer about what philosophy is and is not. And one of the conclusions that has emerged is that it is not a sort of super-science of good and evil.

However, this newly found modesty about providing blueprints for the good life does not altogether either excuse or explain the neglect by modern philosophers of philosophical problems connected with education. I do not think that this neglect springs from the conviction that there *are* no such philosophical problems. Rather it is because philosophers have been so concerned with their 'revolution' that they have concentrated more on the central problems of philosophy—those connected

with knowledge and belief, appearance and reality, free-will and determinism, mind and body, space and time. Peripheral problems connected with concepts like 'education', 'authority', and 'character' have been crowded out, as Hobbes put it, 'no otherwise than the sun deprives the rest of the stars of light, not by hindering their action, but by obscuring and hiding them with his excess of brightness'. It is time that philosophers supplemented their sun-worship by a bit of star-gazing—but this, as I shall try to show, does not mean trying to return to the old task of constructing a horoscope of educational aims.

I suppose the conviction that an educator must have aims is generated by the concept of 'education' itself; for it is a concept that has a standard or norm, as it were, built into it. To speak of 'education', even in contexts quite remote from that of the class-room, is to commit oneself, by implication, to a judgment of value. One might say, for instance, that it was a 'real education' for compilers of the Wolfenden Report to wander round Piccadilly at night-time. Some state of mind is here presupposed which is regarded as commendable, and some particular experiences are regarded as leading on to or contributing to it. There is thus a wide sense of 'education' in which almost anything could be regarded as being part of one's education. Rousseau said that 'education comes to us from nature, from men, and from things'. And of course he was right; for the concept works in as wide a way as this. But there is a narrower and more usual sense of 'education' in which *men* are very much to the fore. For we usually speak of education in contexts where we consciously put ourselves or others in such improving situations.



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Given that 'education' implies, first, some commendable state of mind and, secondly, some experience that is thought to lead up to or to contribute to it, and given also that people are usually deliberately put in the way of such experiences, it is only too easy to think of the whole business in terms of models like that of building a bridge or going on a journey. The commendable state of mind is thought of as an end to be aimed at, and the experiences which lead up to it are regarded as means to its attainment. For this model of adopting means to premeditated ends is one that haunts all our thinking about the promotion of what is valuable. In the educational sphere we therefore tend to look round for the equivalent of bridges to be built or ports to be steered to. Hence the complaints of lack of direction when obvious candidates do not appear to fill the bill.

It is my conviction that this model misleads us in the sphere of education. We have got the wrong picture of the way in which values must enter into education; and this is what occasions the disillusioned muttering about the absence of agreed aims. But to bring out how we are misled we must look at the contexts where the means-end model is appropriate. There is, first of all, that of plans and purposes where we do things in order to put ourselves in the way of other things. We get on a bus in order to get to work; we fill up a form in order to get some spectacles. Our life is not just doing one thing after another; we impose plans and schedules on what we do by treating some as instrumental to others. Some of these we regard as more commendable than others, and what we call our scale of values bears witness to such choices. The second means-end context is that of making or producing things. We mix the flour in order

to make a cake or weld steel in order to make a bridge. We speak of the end-product in a factory and of the means of production in an economic system.

In both these contexts we might well ask a person what he was aiming at, what his objective was. But in both cases the answer would usually be in terms of something pretty concrete. He might say something like 'getting a better job' or 'marrying the girl' in the first context; or something like 'producing a soundless aeroplane' in the second. Similarly if a teacher was asked what he was aiming at, he might state a limited objective like 'getting at least six children through the eleven-plus'. But he might, as it were, lift his eyes a bit from the scene of battle and commit himself to one of the more general aims of education—elusive things like 'the self-realization of the individual', 'character', 'wisdom', or 'citizenship'. But here the trouble starts; for going to school is not a *means* to these in the way in which getting on a bus is a means to getting to work; and they are not made or produced out of the material of the mind in the way in which a penny is produced out of copper. These very general aims are neither goals nor are they end-products. Like 'happiness' they are high-sounding ways of talking about doing some things rather than others and doing them in a certain manner.

It might be objected that education is an art like medicine and that in medicine there is a commonly accepted end-product—physical health. Why should there not be a similar one for education—mental health, for instance? The answer is fairly obvious. Doctors deal mainly with the body and if they agree about what constitutes physical health it is because it can be defined in terms of physical criteria like temperature level and

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metabolism rate. Also there is little objection to manipulating and tinkering with the body in order to bring about the required result.

In the case of education, however, there are no agreed criteria for defining mental health; for either it designates something purely negative like the absence of unconscious conflicts, or, in so far as it is a positive concept, it has highly disputable personal and social preferences written into it. Also education is not, like medicine or psychiatry, a remedial business. When we are concerned with the minds of men there are objections to bringing about positive results in certain sorts of ways. People make moral objections to pre-frontal leucotomy even as a remedial measure. How much more objectionable would it be to promote some more positive state of mind, like a love of peace, in all men by giving them drugs or operating on everyone at birth? Indeed, in my view, disputes between educationists, which take the form of disputes about aims, have largely been disputes about the desirability of a variety of principles involved in such procedures. Values are involved in education not so much as goals or end-products, but as principles implicit in different manners of proceeding or producing.

Of course there can be considerable disagreement about the value of what is to be passed on as well as about the manner of passing it on. At the moment, for instance, there is much disagreement as to whether education should be liberal, technical, or vocational. And this reflects different assessments about the value of what is to be passed on, which is a matter of governmental policies as well as of personal preferences. An educator has an important social function in a com-

munity and, however idiosyncratic his individual aims may be, he cannot be completely indifferent to the pressing needs of the community, especially if he is paid by the state. Different weight is attached by different educators to the needs of the community as distinct from those of the individual child. Indeed those who stress 'mental health' as an educational aim may well be protesting against the effects of collective pressure on the individual. Instead of trying to interpret this aim positively we might regard it as a timely warning against pushing the individual into socially approved tasks at too great a cost to his stability. It is as if a teacher was insisting that, whilst he was fulfilling his essential social function of passing on information and skills and preparing children for different jobs, it should never be forgotten that children may become unhappy and neurotic, isolates from their group, or sexually unbalanced. And the educator should not disregard these other things that go to make up 'the whole man'. In the old days talk of 'character-training' used to serve as a corrective to undue academic or vocational pressure; or religious ideals were appealed to. But nowadays such a corrective must seem to have scientific authority. So 'mental health' enters the field of education—the old Aristotelian 'harmony of the soul' in respectable trappings.

But those who stress the importance of a 'liberal' education are not merely voicing a protest against an academic or vocational emphasis in education which neglects the individual needs of children. Neither are they claiming merely that there should be arts subjects in the curriculum as well as science and typewriting. Their protest relates to the manner as well as to the

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matter of education. For both science and arts subjects can be passed on by liberal or illiberal procedures. Literature and science can both be treated as 'subjects' and, as it were, stamped in to a student. Or they can be treated as living disciples of critical thought and of the imagination, in which the student can be trained on an apprenticeship system. 'Liberal' is a term used of certain types of principles and procedures such as respect for persons and facts, toleration, and deciding matters by discussion rather than by dictat. Its association with the *content* of courses is derivative from the belief that some subjects foster such principles more than others. But this is a naive view—rather like the strange belief that technical colleges can be made more 'liberal' if a certain amount of time is devoted to teaching 'the humanities' to supplement science subjects. For it is surely the *manner* in which any course is presented rather than its matter which is crucial in developing a liberal attitude of mind.

To illustrate more clearly the distinction which I am drawing between 'aims' and 'principles of procedure', let me take a parallel from politics. A man who believes in equality, might, like Godwin, be lured by a positive picture of a society in which differences between people would be minimized. He might want to get rid of differences in wealth and rank, even to breed people in the attempt to iron out innate differences. He might even go so far as to advocate the abolition of institutions like the army or the Church in which some men were given opportunities of lording it over others. Another social reformer, however, might employ the principle of equality in a much more negative sense without any concrete picture to lure him on his journey. He might

insist, merely, that whatever social changes were introduced, no one should be treated differently from anyone else unless a good reason could be produced to justify such unequal treatment. The Godwin type of man would rightly be regarded as pursuing equality as a very general aim; the more cautious Liberal would have no particular aim connected with equality. He would merely insist that whatever schemes were put forward must not be introduced in a way which would infringe his procedural principle.

I think that this is an illuminating parallel to the point I am trying to make about the aims of education. For, in my view, many disputes about the aims of education are disputes about principles of procedure rather than about 'aims' in the sense of objectives to be arrived at by taking appropriate means. The so-called 'aims' in part pick out the different valuations which are built into the different procedures like training, conditioning, the use of authority, teaching by example and rational explanation, all of which fall under the general concept of 'education'.

Consider, for instance, the classic dispute about the aims of education which is so often connected with an argument about the derivation of the word 'education'. There were those like Sir Percy Nunn who stressed the connected with *educere*—to lead out. For them the aim of education must therefore be the development or realization of individual potentialities. Others, like Sir John Adams, stressed the derivation from *educare*—to train, or mould according to some specification. They might be regarded as people who in fact believed in aims in a proper sense, in moulding boys into Christian gentlemen, for instance. The progressive who protests

against this conception of education is not simply jibbing at the end-product of a Christian gentleman. He is also jibbing at the assimilation of education to an art where something is produced out of material. Rousseau, for instance, protested vociferously against treating children as little mannikins, as material to be poured into an adult mould. A child, he argued, should be treated with respect as a person. The progressive, therefore, like Dewey or Kilpatrick, presents another picture of the educational process. The child's interest must be awakened and he must be put into situations where the task rather than the man exerts the discipline. He will thus acquire habits and skills that are useful to him, and, by co-operating with others in common tasks, will develop respect for others and for himself. In the eyes of the progressive the use of authority as a principle of procedure is not only an inefficient way to pass on skills and information; it is also an immoral way to treat a child. It is made even worse in both respects by techniques like the use of reward and punishment.

So at the one end of the family tree generated by the concept of 'education' there are procedures involving the use of authority in which the voice and the cane are used to produce a desirable end-product. Education is here thought of after the model of means to ends in the arts. At the other end the model of purpose and planning is stressed; but it is the purpose and planning of the child, not of the adult. As Rousseau put it: 'By attempting nothing in the beginning you would have produced an educational prodigy.'

But, as any educationist must know, if he reflects on the matter, these are only a limited selection of the procedures that are in fact employed. There is, for instance,

the influence exerted by one person on another in some sort of apprenticeship system, when the teacher guides rather than goads. We learn carpentry by doing it with someone who is a bit better at carpentry; we learn to think clearly by talking with someone who thinks a bit more clearly than we do. And this other person need not be a charismatic figure so beloved by the advocates of 'impressionism' in the public schools or Boy Scout movement. It may be a person who is not only skilled but who has the additional ability of being able to explain and give an account of what he is up to. Progressives often object to talk and chalk and confuse the use of the voice with one way in which it is used—the authoritative way. But most good teachers use their voices to excite and to explain, not simply to instruct, command, or drill.

My guess is that most of the important things in education are passed on in this manner—by example and explanation. An attitude, a skill, is caught; sensitivity, a critical mind, respect for people and facts develop where an articulate and intelligent exponent is on the job. Yet the model of means to ends is not remotely applicable to the transaction that is taking place. Values, of course, are involved in the transaction; if they were not it would not be called 'education'. Yet they are not end-products or terminating points of the process. They reside both in the skills and cultural traditions that are passed on and in the procedure for passing them on. As Aristotle put the matter long ago:

For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts . . . but it is not the man who does these that



## MUST AN EDUCATOR HAVE AN AIM?

is just and temperate, but the man who does them *as* just and temperate men do them.

And how can this happen unless we learn them in the company of experienced practitioners—who understand what they are doing and who can explain it to others?

There are all sorts of things that can be passed on that are valuable. Almost anything, as I started off by saying, can be regarded as being of educational value. And, to a large extent, those who favour one type of procedure rather than another choose examples that suit themselves and advocate the practice of things that can be passed on best in accordance with their favourite model. The man who advocates authority and drill is most at home with things like Latin and arithmetic where rules have simply to be learnt defining what is right or wrong and where, in the early stages at any rate, there is little scope for rational explanation or learning by experience. The progressive is most at home with things like art, drama, and environmental studies where projects can develop without too much artificiality. And the man who believes in rational instruction is usually inclined towards things like science, history, and geometry. An intelligent teacher, I suppose, will always first try to interest his pupils. As Whitehead put it, romance must precede precision. But, given the interest, he will adapt his procedure to what he is trying to teach.

In society generally there are those who are prone to view life not as a stream of experience to be enjoyed nor as a series of predicaments to be lived through but as a chain of obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of goals that stretch out like a chain of oases in a desert, or as recalcitrant material to be moulded into some pleasing social or personal pattern. And, of course, many of the

things which we do can be regarded as ways of implementing concrete and limited objectives. But this picture of the pursuit of aims is often exalted into grandiose talk about the purpose of life or the purpose of political activity. Self-realization, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and the classless society act as lures to provide a distant destination for the great journey of life.

Such general aims are not just harmless extravagances due to the overworking of a limited model of means to ends, a sort of metaphysical whistle in the dark. For men will do terrible things to other men in order to implement aims like racial purity which are both idiotic and illusory. The crucial question to ask, when men wax enthusiastic on the subject of their aims, is what *procedures* are to be adopted in order to implement them. We then get down to moral brass tacks. Do they in fact favour the model of implementing aims taken from the arts and from technology? There are those who favour the maximum of authoritative regulation such as is necessary in an army: there are those who use other people and mould them for their own purposes; there are those who are determined to live according to rational principles and to extend the maximum of toleration to others who disagree with them; there are those whose preoccupation is the pursuit of private good for whom hell is the other fellow.

These differences of procedure are writ large in the family, in economic affairs, and in political life. In education they are accentuated because the impact of man upon man is more conscious and because people are put into positions of authority where there is great scope for adopting their favoured procedures. My point

is that arguments about the aims of education reflect these basic differences in principles of procedure. The Puritan and the Catholic both thought they were promoting God's kingdom, but they thought it had to be promoted in a different manner. And the different manner made it quite a different kingdom.

Of course arguments about general aims do not reflect *only* differences in principles of procedure or disagreements about the relative importance of public needs and individual development. Equally important are valuations of content where the merits of, e.g. art as distinct from those of science or history are under discussion. But the real issues involved in such comparisons are obscured by talk about self-realization, life, happiness, and so on. For what sort of self is to be realized? What quality of life is worth perpetuating? Teachers surely care whether or not poetry rather than push-pin is perpetuated, to use a time-honoured example. The problem of justifying such 'higher' activities is one of the most difficult and persistent problems in ethics. But talk about self-realization and other such omnibus 'ends' does more than obscure it; it also encourages an *instrumental* way of looking at the problem of justification. For a nebulous end is invented which such activities are supposed to lead up to, because it is erroneously assumed that education must be justified by reference to an end which is extrinsic to it. The truth is much more that there is a quality of life embedded in the activities which constitute education, and that 'self-realization' can be explicated only by reference to such activities. Thus, if by 'life' is meant what goes on outside schools and universities, there is an important sense in which 'life' must be for the sake of education, not education for life.

## *'Experience' and the Function of the Educator*

SO FAR I have been concerned with the aims of the educator, with ends or objectives that he may or may not have in mind to lure him on his journey. I have admitted the importance of concrete and limited objectives but I have been very suspicious of over-all high sounding aims like 'mental health' or 'self-development'. I have suggested that the crucial valuative questions, when we come down to moral brass tacks, are questions of principles and procedures.

A distinction, however, can be made between the aims of an individual educator and his function *qua* educator. To take a parallel: the function of a policeman *qua* policeman is to preserve law and order in a community; but he may have all sorts of individual aims in doing his job. Indeed a police commissioner may be hauled over the coals because he has paid insufficient attention to the preservation of law and order in his district; he may have been using his job as a means of making money for himself by the receipt of bribes. In a similar way whatever the idiosyncratic aims of an educator may be, his social function is surely the passing on of rules, information and skills in a community which are essential to the life and continuance of that community. Men differ from animals in that they regulate their lives

according to rules and use a whole mass of information, which it has taken centuries to acquire, in the process. Unlike animals they have traditions, a history, and culture. They write books and keep records. The information so stored is essential for the continuance of civilization. The main function of the educator is to pass on this priceless human heritage. Men have a paltry instinctive equipment when they are compared with some animals and insects. They survive because of the great plasticity of their responses and because of their social heritage. They have a very long period of maturation when compared with other animals, and, during this period, the skills, information, and traditions necessary for survival are handed on by parents and educators.

This point is so obvious and banal that it seems scarcely credible that some thinkers and educators have seemed to dispute it. When they stress the role of 'experience' in education what have they been trying to say? Rousseau, for instance, claimed that 'education comes to us from nature, from men, and from things', and he stressed the importance of nature and things as distinct from men. He surely cannot have meant that children should literally be brought up in a Robinson Crusoe manner. The 'noble savage' is all very well; but he is still a savage. And Rousseau explicitly allowed for the influence of men when he suggested that Emile should be brought up by just one tutor!

The stress on 'experience' and 'nature' is surely a healthy corrective not to the handing on of traditions, skills, and information, but to the mechanical and unimaginative *manner* in which they are often handed on. When the classical empiricists stressed the impor-

tance of 'experience' in the acquisition of knowledge they were, in fact, reacting against a variety of things which characterized the search for and the handing on of knowledge. Their revolt was made articulate in the strange view that knowledge *originates* in individual experience. Locke's *tabula rasa* conception of the mind and Rousseau's innocent boy full of curiosity and wonder were extreme products of this revolt. A moment's reflection, however, reveals its absurdity; for one of the first things that children do is to learn a language. And in learning to speak correctly they also learn to pick out things and classify them in a way which it has taken men many centuries to acquire. Without social training children would probably not learn to walk, let alone to talk. And the vast experience of our ancestors is incorporated in the language into which we are initiated at a very early stage.

It is absurd to think, therefore, that knowledge, as we understand it, could ever originate in the experience of the individual. So in stressing that knowledge originates in experience the empiricists must have been making other crucial points about the importance of individual experience in rather a misleading way. And this, of course, is what they were doing. They were stressing that, in knowledge of the world at any rate, as distinct from pure mathematics, experience is decisive in establishing the truth or falsity of hypotheses. The acquisition of knowledge does not consist in spinning out the implications of innate ideas as a spider spins a web. It is a matter of rejecting or accepting assumptions on the basis of experience. The empiricists stressed the importance of observation in knowledge by claiming that knowledge begins with experience; what they should

have said was that, however we get ideas, their truth or falsity can only be established by experience and experiment.

Along lines such as these, therefore, it is possible to show that the stress on experience by the classical empiricists is quite compatible with the view that the main function of the educator is to pass on information, skills, and rules. And just as the thesis of the classical empiricists is quite compatible with this view of the main function of the educator, so also are the contentions of thinkers like Dewey who have in more recent times emphasized the role of experience in education. They too, in their pragmatic theory of knowledge, were reacting against the prevailing intellectualism of realist thinkers; and in their educational theory they were issuing correctives to current conceptions of education, not in so far as this *must* involve the passing on of information, skills, and rules, but in so far as this function has too often been discharged in a very rigid and unimaginative manner. It is therefore important to get clear about the sorts of correctives that can be included under the general term ‘experience’.

There is, first of all, the need for first-hand experience to supplement precept and instruction. Knowledge is not just a matter of knowing *that* certain things are the case; we must also know how to use the information that we have. Cooking cannot be learnt simply out of cookery books; for the rules and recipes which are therein incorporated have to be applied intelligently to concrete situations. Not all people who have a good theoretical training in psychological theories are good at interpreting and explaining the behaviour of their fellow-men. I once tried to keep poultry with a book on poultry keep-

ing in my hand. I soon found that I had to go and ask questions of someone who knew about hens. For neither information nor rules include fool-proof tips about their application. And we only learn to apply rules by applying them—usually under skilled supervision. Therefore those who stress the importance of experience in education are often insisting that practice must always go along with precept. A corollary of this insistence is that intelligent practice is only possible if the rule or information is within the grasp of the child. Ideas must not be what Whitehead called 'inert'. It is useless, for instance, to pass on a skill like that of reading before the child has reached the stage when he is ready to read. Piaget has done a great deal of work to show the levels of development at which certain kinds of concepts like number, space, and volume, are within the grasp of the child. It is no good trying to teach history to a child before he has developed a concept of the past. First-hand experience can degenerate into meaningless drill if the ideas passed on are beyond the comprehension of the child. Too many students mug up histories of ideas without a grasp of the problems that the thinkers of the past were trying to solve. Collingwood used to insist that history, properly understood, is the attempt to rethink the thoughts of dead men.

Connected with the stress on first-hand experience, on knowing how as distinct from merely knowing that, is a further corrective which is often issued under the title of 'experience'. This is the move towards 'child-centred' education, the emphasis put on the interests and needs of the child which any educator must take account of if the child is going to assimilate anything that he is taught.



There is, however, a fundamental ambiguity about this doctrine. For although it is a truism to say that it is difficult to teach anyone anything unless it is interesting, things can be interesting either because they appeal to existing interests or because they are put over in such a way that they *create* interests. And there are some things in which people *ought* to be interested, and the job of the teacher is to make them interested in them. There is a similar ambiguity about the concept of ‘need’; for roughly speaking a person’s needs are for those things which it will be injurious for him to lack. These may be for things like love or food, without which he will be stunted as an individual in the sense that he will be prevented from doing most other things that he wants to do unless these basic needs are satisfied. Or they may be needs to do things like write, read, and do sums, without which he will be seriously impaired as a member of a civilized community. A man in a modern state needs arithmetic almost as much as he needs a bed or a bath. But he often does not *know* that he needs them. And when it is said that education should be adapted to the needs of the individual it is never clear really what is being said except that a warning is being issued against treating the child as merely a citizen in the making without any thought for his individual idiosyncrasies and aspirations.

Nevertheless, the stress on interests and needs is a necessary corrective to those who regard education *just* as a matter of passing on what it is good for a child to know without any thought for what he may be interested in and what his peculiar needs may be as an individual who, in some respects at least, is different from other individuals. It is also a way of stressing the

importance of motivation in learning and of pointing out what a child is in fact interested in often bears little relation to what an adult thinks that he ought to be interested in. This conative aspect of experience was, as a matter of fact, sadly neglected by the classical empiricists like Locke.

There is, however, another aspect of the stress on experience which the classical empiricists did not neglect. This has to do with the revolt against *authority*. To get the real flavour of this one has to read writers like Bacon when he speaks of the authority of Aristotle, or Hobbes when he speaks of the Schoolmen, or Bentham when he speaks of the Common Law, Wisdom, they held, does not necessarily lie in the past. To find out truth men do not have to thumb laboriously the pages of Aristotle, to search for a precedent, or to consult the Pope or a book. They can find out these things for themselves, provided that they use the right method. 'Words are but the images of matter; and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them-is to fall in love with a picture.' Men must go out and make observations. By cautious and systematic collection of instances they will be able to replace their rash anticipations of Nature by judicious interpretations. All men have reason and can do this for themselves—provided, that is, that they go about it in the right way, as revealed by Bacon. It follows, therefore, that for an empiricist nothing is true simply because someone has proclaimed it to be so. It has to be shown to be true by comparing the deduced consequences of an assumption with observations. The fundamentals of this revolt against authority can be found in Descartes, too, who insisted that nothing can be accepted as true

unless reasons can be produced for thinking it true. Descartes and the other rationalists differed from the empiricists in that they thought that the method by means of which assumptions could be shown to be true must be like that of mathematics, not the cautious grubbing round looking at Nature advocated by the empiricists. But they shared the anti-authoritarian attitude of the empiricists.

Now an educator, like Dewey, who stresses the role of experience in education, is emphasizing the importance of passing on this inquisitive, sceptical, pragmatic attitude of mind. He is revolting against the old conception of education which inculcates a credulous attitude to what is passed on and a subservient attitude to the teachers who pose as authorities on the subject which they teach. Teachers must not only pass on information; they must also pass on a critical habit of thought. They must positively encourage their pupils to find out for themselves whether what they are taught is true. They must consult their own experience to test the traditions which are handed on to them.

Children must not simply be taught things; they must also be initiated into a tradition of experiment and critical discussion. Here again the stress on experience is not incompatible with the main function of the educator—the handing on of information and rules. It is inconsistent with handing them on in a rigid, mechanical and authoritarian manner. For an empiricist a good discipline of learning is one that eventually dispenses with disciples.

Indeed, far from it being the case that the educator who believes in the importance of 'experience' can dispense with tradition, empiricism itself is a tradition of

thought. It is the tradition which insists that other traditions should not be taken for granted until they have been subjected to the test of experience. J. S. Mill made the point very strongly that 'the dictum that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods which men repeat after one another till they pass into commonplaces, but which all experience refutes. . . . It is a piece of idle sentimentality that truth, merely as truth, has any inherent power denied to error of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake'. The point is that truth will only prevail if there is a strong critical tradition backed by legal safeguards. Without the insistence by empiricists that traditions may be correct but they must first be subjected to the test of experience and *shown* to be correct, the most colossal errors and injustices could be and have been perpetuated for generations. Indeed in the history of man, taken as a whole, the usual thing has been to pass on as unquestionable truths the assumptions of previous generations. The empiricist tradition, which insists that traditions must be criticized and examined, is a brittle crust on a mass of irrationality and self-perpetuating dogma.

This tradition of criticism is part and parcel of what is called the democratic way of life, which the educator in a democratic society should be most concerned to hand on. For the democrat insists that *reasons* must always be given for policies and that these policies must be justified before the representatives of people who have to suffer from them. They must be confronted with the test of experience. Behind a lot of vague slogans like 'the sovereignty of the people' lies the insistence that *procedures* must be provided for ensuring

that the policies of rulers shall be criticized in the light of their effect on the lives of the ruled. The law may enshrine the wisdom of our ancestors. But times may have changed and they may have been wrong after all. The ruler in a democratic society cannot appeal to his divine right or to his traditional status in order to commend his policies. He has to defend them at the bar of experience.

The educator, therefore, who believes in experience, is the inheritor of a tradition which stretches back to courageous men like John Locke who subscribed not simply to rather recondite views of the mind as a *tabula rasa* but who was also an active supporter of the invisible college which blossomed into the Royal Society and who, in the name of ‘government by consent’, actively supported revolution. In advocating the importance of experience the educator is not simply making an idiosyncratic attack on inert ideas and mechanical methods. He himself is an inheritor of a way of life. But his way of life is defined in terms of procedures and principles which make it possible for assumptions and institutions to change in the light of growing knowledge and experience. He must hand on the wisdom of the past. But he must also hand on procedures and an attitude of mind which permit truth to prevail and institutions to be adapted to changing conditions.

The main task of the political thinker in a democracy is to make institutional provision for the implementation of social principles. Institutions must be devised for making sure that the experience of citizens is not neglected. For in so far as the democrat believes that government should be concerned with ‘the common good’ he has to ensure that it should not be conducted

for the benefit of purely sectional interests and that minority claims shall not be completely disregarded. In so far as he believes in 'equality' he has to see how provision can be made so that people shall not be treated differently without relevant grounds being produced for treating them differently. In so far as he believes in liberty he has to see that individual interests are protected and that they are not interfered with unless good reason is given to justify such interference. All these are institutional matters of great complexity. But, as Popper has so admirably put it, 'Institutions are like fortresses: they must be well-designed and manned'. The educator's function in a democratic society is to ensure that the men who man the institutions have the attitudes and principles without which democracy can degenerate into a merely formal façade. Such 'education for democracy' consists largely in young people being initiated, on an apprenticeship basis, into the working of democratic institutions. Without this democracy itself becomes an 'inert idea'. It is equally inert if children are initiated into such procedures before they have the experience to grasp the point of elections, committees, and so on, and if the affairs in which they are asked to participate are quite unrelated to their interests and needs. The educator, in handing on the procedures necessary to an empiricist way of life, would be foolish to neglect the other aspects of 'experience' which we have already considered.

But an even more fundamental task lies in training children in the more *general* attitudes of mind of which the democratic way of life is a particular application. Belief in 'the common good', equality, and liberty are, after all, social articulations of the fundamental moral

principles of impartiality and respect for persons. The criticism of policies is a particular case of the rational assessment of rules and assumptions. And there are some more *general* things to be said about the training of character and the cultivation of the intellect. To this we must now proceed.

## Training Intellect and Character

THERE is a long-standing debate between educationists which is as old as Aristotle. 'For mankind,' he said, 'are by no means agreed about the best things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the main aim of our training?'

Kilpatrick claims that this is still the basic issue which divides American educationists. On the one hand is what he calls the Alexandrian type of education—the attempt to teach the content of the written word in the same way as the schools of Alexandria tried to pass on the wisdom of Greece. On the other hand is the new post-Pestalozzi conception of education which adopts ‘character-building as its fundamental goal’.

My intention in this talk is not to discuss these different so-called aims of education by dwelling on detailed matters of policy or curriculum planning—the merits of philosophy as distinct from football in the allocation of periods; I want to show that there need be no basic conflict between cultivating the intellect and training character. The crucial differences between edu-



cationists are to do with the manner in which they go about doing either. As I said in my seventh talk: the conflict is more to do with procedures than with aims. The training of character can be done in a most Alexandrian manner and the intellect can be cultivated in a manner of which even Rousseau might have approved.

To take the intellect first: if we consider the objections which progressives like Kilpatrick make to the cultivation of the intellect we find that they are all connected with the manner in which the intellect is cultivated. For the procedures portrayed all approximate to the use of authority and drill. No serious thought is given to what the child is interested in; it is a question only of what it is good for him to know. As one educator put it: 'Elementary education can do nothing better for a child than store his memory with things deserving to be there. He will be grateful for them when he grows up, even if he kicks now.' This implies that the child is an adult in the making. He must memorize. What the book says and the teacher teaches is what matters to him. He must be examined often. The examinations are often set as forms on which the student has to say which of several scraps of information is the right scrap. Machines are often used to do the marking.

Few would dispute that education means, among other things, passing on a great deal of information. It is the procedure of passing it on and the attitude towards this informative business that invites objections. Whitehead put the matter very well when he said:

'Culture is activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty or humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth . . . Education is the

acquisition of the utilization of knowledge . . . The problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of the trees.'

Like Dewey, Whitehead attacked what he called 'inert ideas' and stressed the importance of acquiring knowledge which is related to interest. Too often, as Rousseau put it, 'the scientific atmosphere destroys science'. Precision and discipline there must be; but it must arise from the strivings of the child, not simply from the strictures of the teacher.

The Alexandrian procedure, however, does not simply ignore interest and utility; it also inculcates a credulous attitude to what is passed on. Teachers are in authority over their pupils; but they are only too prone to pose as authorities on the subjects which they teach. They just tell their pupils and convey the impression that what they say is correct because they say so or because it is written in some book. Now this may well be a reasonable attitude when Latin declensions or the rules of arithmetic are being taught; for the standards of correctness have been laid down and there is little question of argument or justification. But with things like history and science the position is very different; criticism and speculation are the life-blood of these subjects. Yet they are too often represented not as an intellectual adventure but as an accumulation of established facts. Knowledge is passed on but not the habit of critical thought.

It is a strange aberration to suppose that people learn to think scientifically either by the necessities of nature or by acquiring information from authorities. The contrast that Rousseau made between Robinson Crusoe learning to think by experience and those who are brought up on books is an absurd one. In fact people

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usually learn to think by being with others who have learnt to think. Science starts when, for some reason or other, men are led to question the information which has been passed on, as were the Milesian school in early Greece; for science is critical discussion harnessed to curiosity. If an assumption is seriously challenged, reasons have to be produced to defend it and to support the usurping assumption. In science this means facts; it is no good appealing to the authority of a man. And facts are not things that lie around the world waiting to be included in the latest text-book; they are what are appealed to, to defend an assumption.

A person who can think is a person who has taken the objector into his own mind. Philosophy, as Plato put it, is the soul's dialogue with itself. And how can this happen unless a man has been constantly in critical company? Critical thought is not an aim which lures scientists or historians on their journey. It is a procedure which they employ *as* scientists or historians. And if they are also teachers who believe in the cultivation of the intellect, they need not be Alexandrians. They can convey their curiosity about Nature and about the past to their pupils; and by the manner in which they present the information which they hand on, they can encourage critical thought as well. A man is a poor teacher who is not sometimes found to be wrong by his pupils.

Critics of the cultivation of the intellect usually contrast it with the training of character, which they consider to be the proper business of educators. But I now wish to show that the training of character can be carried on in just as Alexandrian a manner as the cultivation of the intellect.

In educational circles the term 'character' has a similar function to a term like 'group integration' in social work; people feel in the swim if they say they are promoting it, but it is never clear what they are promoting. Character-training often means just making a boy tough or courageous irrespective of circumstances. Sir Richard Livingstone and 'Outward Bound' enthusiasts both saw in the training of character a panacea for a world adrift. But were they in the same line of business? A man's character is, I suppose, what is distinctive about him and, like the word 'trait', which is often associated with it, 'character' refers to the distinctive manner in which a man goes about his business—honestly, selfishly, stubbornly. A man's nature is shown in his inclinations and desires—in the goals which he pursues. But his character is shown in the manner of his pursuits—in the regulation which he imposes on his desires and inclinations.

But over and above this highest common factor of common meaning, 'character' is a systematically slippery concept. For we can speak in a non-committal way of a man's character, we can speak of him as having a type of character, and we can speak of him as 'having character'. These distinctions, so it seems to me, are very important in the context of talk about the training of character and are closely related to the distinction which I want to draw between Alexandrian and less authoritarian procedures. I do not think that we need be much bothered here with types of character which is my second sense of 'character'—the one beloved of characterologists like Freud, La Bruyere, and Theophrastus. Still less need we bother about cases where we talk of a man *being* a character. I want to dwell on the distinction between 'character' in my first, non-committal

sense, and my third sense of 'having character'. When we speak of a man's character in the first and non-committal sense we are referring simply to the sum-total of his traits like honesty, punctuality, and selfishness. If a servant is—or was—given a character, her future employer is informed of the particular traits which she tends to exhibit, the part of the social code which is, as it were, stamped upon her. And, in this sense of 'character', the metaphor of 'stamping' may well be appropriate. The model of production in the arts, to which I referred in my first talk as *a* procedure of education, may fit. This stamping-in is usually achieved by the use of authority and drill—by what is called indoctrination.

When, on the other hand, we say that a man 'has character' or that he is a man 'of character' we are not simply referring to the sum total of his traits. When Pope said that women have no characters at all he was not, surely, suggesting that they were dishonest, selfish, and mendacious. Presumably he was suggesting that they were fickle, inconstant, and sporadic in conforming to standards because they were at the mercy of their moods and inclinations. Or he might have been suggesting that they took their standards entirely from their husbands or from the clique in which they happened to collect. We speak of integrity of character. A man who has it is not credited with any definite traits; but the claim is made that, whatever traits he exhibits, there will be some sort of control and consistency in the manner in which he exhibits them. He will not give way to his inclinations, he easily corrupted, or take his colour from his company. In Freudian language, he will have a strong ego and will not be at the mercy either of his

id or super-ego. He will be unlike the Spartans who were courageous and temperate in Sparta, but who, when abroad, fell easy victims to the corrupting influence of potentates, priests, and profligates.

A man who 'has character' may present an appearance of inconsistency to the world. He may be indolent in looking up friends but very conscientious about entertaining his family; he may be untidy at home, but very tidy at work; he may help one friend to get divorced but do nothing about helping another. But these variations in rule-following cannot be correlated either with the strength of his inclinations or with the persistence of social pressures. He follows rules which seem to him to have some point and modifies them intelligently according to differences in circumstances; and the point, to a large extent, is determined by his adherence to certain higher-order principles.

Roback, in his classic on *The Psychology of Character*, defines 'character' as 'an enduring psycho-physical disposition to inhibit instinctive impulses in accordance with a regulative principle'. These principles may be limited in scope, like those of Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, whose principles were that an officer should care for his men, obey a superior officer, and honour international conventions. Or they might be more general ones, such as one ought not to exploit others to further one's own interest or that one ought to minimise avoidable misery. Or they might be morally suspect principles, such as that one ought always to further the interests of one's country, church, or party. A man would 'have character' to the extent to which he was impervious to temptation or to social pressures in

applying particular rules intelligently in the light of such supreme principles. But, of course, he might have character—and be bad.

It is difficult to determine what educational procedures lead to the development of character in this sense. Piaget has made much of the different attitude which a child has to rules at different stages of his development. It is not, he claims, till about the age of seven or so that children begin to see the point of rules and to modify their behaviour accordingly. Before that age they tend to accept standards as transcendently imposed and unalterable. And, I suppose, children start to develop character only when they are presented with conflicting standards and have to choose their own. But this does not come about only in the manner beloved of progressives — by learning through experience in the performance of common tasks. It also develops if adults are at hand who themselves have character and who can give practical reasons for their principles. This is different from 'pep talks'. Practical wisdom is not passed on by preaching.

This sounds very fine; but any schoolmaster or youth-leader knows that boys with character are rarities. It is much more usual for boys to take their colour from their company or to conform to standards set by some adolescent Achilles. Odysseus is respected — but preferred in his tent. As he sits brooding there he cannot help wondering sometimes whether the psychologists may not, after all, be right who say that a style of life is laid down by the age of five. The educator's pitch may have been queered by the legions of mothers and fathers who have been on the job before him.

As a matter of fact, I think too little is known to help

him much in these sombre reflections. Bowlby, it is true, claimed that if a child has not had the care of a mother at certain critical periods of infancy this will lead to traits like 'distractability', 'unreliability', and 'lack of self-inhibition', which are almost definitions of having *no* character. And Freud, in his theory of the super-ego and of the infantile sources of character-traits, did much to explain types of character—people like the penurious man or the obsessive who, as it were, get stuck at a stage of development. But, in my opinion, too little is known of the positive conditions which favour the development of character. In Freud there is no positive theory of the development of the ego. These conditions may be specifically connected with the manner in which rules are passed on in the years before rational procedures are effective. To what extent are the phenomena of the super-ego, for instance, in which the 'inner voice' is so often stressed, connected with the use of the authoritative voice in early childhood? What happens if parents systematically condition their children by reward and punishment? How much can be assimilated by spontaneous imitation? There are ages of maturation at which it is appropriate to teach children skills like reading. Meaningless drill before that period is damaging to the skill. Are there similar levels for moral instruction? Is it a hopeless task for a schoolmaster to attempt to develop character in a boy who has been consistently drilled by his parents? Or is it a hopeless task if he has not been so drilled? My own view is that the manner in which we pass on rules matters as much as the rules which we pass on—especially if we are interested in developing character. Yet too little is known of the unintended consequences of our well-



meaning efforts to pass on rules to children. The fact that a professor of psychology can seriously pose the question 'Is conscience a conditioned reflex?' is sufficient to demonstrate the *naïveté* of some psychologists on this vital issue.

But whatever the state of the wicket on which the educator has to bat, it is obvious that in adolescence, which is the main period of character-training—as it is for the cultivation of the intellect—he relies on learning by experience, example, and rational instruction, if he is interested in developing character. If he is, like the Spartans, interested only in impressing a particular pattern of traits on a boy, he will probably rely on authority drill, and the use of reward and punishment. And these differences in procedure correspond to those stressed between Alexandrians and others in the sphere of the cultivation of the intellect. Being well informed is different from having a critical and trained mind in the way in which character in the non-committal sense is different from having character. It is a matter of the presence or absence of a self-imposed consistency and what Aristotle called 'knowing the reason why of things'. And the difference is in part due to the manner in which the teacher passes on information and rules, which is perpetuated in the manner in which the pupils come to regard them.

Plato believed that the aim of education was to turn the eye of the soul outwards towards the light. But by 'light' he meant truth or goodness as he, Plato, understood them. His educational system was designed to train a ruling class of Platonists. But he was himself trained by Socrates in the procedure known as dialectic. In his own thought and teaching he passed on the chal-

lenge of assumptions and the production of counter-examples which was implicit in the procedure. This helped him to arrive at his own grasp of essences; but, as a procedure, it also enabled pupils like Aristotle to question and reject the conclusions of their master. The manner of his teaching encouraged the questioning of the matter. This is a paradigm for the point that I have been trying to make—in the spheres both of intellect and character it is the manner that maketh man.

One of the most awe-inspiring features of academic institutions is the tyranny of fashions. Ten years ago if one mentioned God in certain philosophical circles it was almost like swearing in an Edwardian drawing room, and if one suggested in certain places that psychology might after all be about the mind of man rather than about his bodily movements, there used to be muttering that one needed one's brain tested. I want to discuss the tyranny of such a fashion. For my thesis is, roughly speaking, that the relationship between education and theories of learning has been largely misconceived—colosally misconceived. Far from it being the case that educationists have a lot to learn from the theory of learning, I want to suggest that the psycho-

logy of learning could benefit enormously from a study of the practice of education.

The fashion which I have in mind has a respectable and ancient lineage. It dates back at least to the seventeenth century when Thomas Hobbes suggested that the behaviour of men could be explained in the same sort of way as the behaviour of bodies in motion. Men, after all, have bodies, and in their loves and hates they move towards and away from each other. Could not life be then nothing but motion of the limbs, thinking nothing but a movement of some substance in the head, and feeling the motion of some substance round the heart? Or could not men's ideas, as Hume suggested, be regarded as mental atoms bound together by mechanical laws of association which functioned as a parallel to the laws of gravity in the physical world?

Biology developed in the nineteenth century and the suggestion that men behaved like bodies in motion was, to a certain extent, modified by the suggestion that men behaved like animals as well. Theories of instincts and irrational urges supplemented the pushes and pulls of the old mechanical systems. And in modern learning theories, like those of Hull and Skinner, a strange explanatory brew was concocted in which vaguely conceived biological notions like 'need' jostled with mechanical concepts like 'stimulus', and a marriage of convenience was arranged between biology and mechanics which gave birth to the monstrous mongrel concept of 'drive'. Learning theorists were not at all modest about their claims. Hull, for instance, boldly proclaimed that a psychologist should start from 'colourless movements and mere receptor impulses as such' and eventually explain everything in terms of such concepts

'familial behaviour, individual adaptive efficiency (intelligence), the formal educative processes, psychogenic disorders, social control and delinquency, character and personality, culture and acculturation, magic and religious practices, custom law and jurisprudence, politics and government and many other specialized fields of behaviour.'

In fact Hull developed some simple postulates which gave dubious answers to limited questions about particular species of rats.

This metaphysical movement was understandable. For man had been treated previously as lord of creation, a rational creature who had free-will and whose behaviour was not subject to laws at all. So those who reacted against the traditional concept of man, like most rebels, pushed their views to extremes. And maybe it was necessary. Maybe one does not really see how dotty an assumption is until someone attempts to work out its implications in detail. Maybe Hull and his fellow learning theorists have done a considerable service to psychology by exhibiting a sort of detailed dottiness.

What then is so dotty about the Hobbes-Hull-Skinner approach? This is another way of asking what was valuable in the old conception of man as a rational animal. For when Aristotle distinguished man from animals and plants by stressing his rationality he did not mean that men are not subject to impulse, incontinence and fits of brutishness. He meant that men lead a distinctive sort of life because they are capable of imposing plans and rules on their conduct. Man is a purposive, rule-following animal. He does not merely, like animals or machines, act *in accordance with* rules; he acts because of his *knowledge* of them. He forms in-

tentions. We cannot bring out what we *mean* by a human action without reference to the ends which men seek and the plans and rules which they impose upon their seeking. Indeed most human ends are impossible even to describe without reference to social standards. Passing examinations, getting married, and getting promotion are goals in terms of which one might explain quite a lot that goes on in the precincts of an academic institution; but how could one begin to bring out what is meant by such goals without reference to social standards? And what would *count* as a means to such goals if we had no rules of efficiency and of social appropriateness which help us to describe and explain what people are up to? If it were suggested—perhaps rather fancifully—that attending a lecture is a means to passing an examination, this implies that it may lead on to it in a way which going to the pictures will not and that it will lead on to it in a socially appropriate manner—unlike bribing an examiner.

Standards of correctness are, as a matter of fact, built into most typically psychological terms. To *remember* is not just to have something passing through one's mind; it is to be right about what happened in the past. To *know* is to have good grounds for what one feels sure about; to *perceive* is to see something that is really there. And even terms which are regarded as explanatory terms in psychology make no *sense* without reference to standards or rules. To say that a person *needs* something, for instance, is to say that he is suffering from some sort of injury if he is without it. And what constitutes injury depends upon some standard or norm. To postulate a *motive* for an action is to point to a goal which explains a deviation from a conventional

expectation. If we ask what a man's motive is for getting married or giving a Christmas present we are suggesting that he is going to the altar or giving the present for reasons which are not the conventional ones.

Now we can never give an adequate explanation or description of such actions or performances in mechanical terms such as 'stimulus' and 'drive' beloved by learning theorists. For a reference to *movements* alone will never do the trick. What movements are either necessary or sufficient for describing what we mean by things like signing a contract, catching a bus, or winning a girl's affection? Movements, of course, are involved; but they only count as part of an action because they are grouped together as leading up to a goal or falling under a rule. From the point of view of *mere movements* how does one distinguish arriving at a lecture punctually out of habit, on principle, and for a purpose? The movements might be the same in all cases; but we recognize them as very different types of action. The concept of an action is inseparable too, from the concept of 'knowing what we are doing'. And this makes no sense at the level of mere movements. Furthermore the concept of an action is inseparable from that of intelligence which gives another reason for objecting to the mechanistic programme. Men will vary their movements towards a goal according to relevant differences in a situation. And provided that they get to the goal almost any movement within a certain range will count to class it as an example of an action of a certain sort. Human actions can therefore be described as intelligent or stupid, efficient or inefficient, correct or incorrect; but movements are things that just happen. Such descriptions do not apply to them unless they are seen in the context of

an action. There cannot therefore be an adequate description or sufficient explanation of human actions which employs only concepts such as 'stimulus' and 'drive' which belong to a logically different category.

Of course there are some movements which are *necessary* conditions of human actions and performances. The truism that we cannot think without a brain can be enlarged into a story about the excitation of phase sequences in the cell assemblies of the association areas of the brain. But we cannot begin to describe what we mean by performances such as remembering, perceiving, and knowing in such terms. For how can we get notions like being right about the past or having good evidence for what we say by studying the movements of the body or brain? We have to understand human conventions and human language and the criteria in terms of which actions and statements are assessed. And these cannot be gleaned by doing physiology or by studying animals. For animals have no institutions; they have no history; they do not even speak and hand down conventions by means of speech and records. They probably have not even got a concept of the past and future.

On grounds such as these it seems to be obviously absurd to think that conditioning theories in the Hull-Skinner tradition could be of much interest or relevance to *educationists*. For educationists are mainly concerned with handing on the rules and traditions of civilization and with getting children to learn or get things right. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to think that classical learning theory is of no relevance at all. For there are, perhaps, some things that *happen* to us rather than things which we do, knowing what we are



doing, which can be explained in mechanical terms. After all, if we fall off a cliff our movements towards the ground are explained in terms of the laws of motion. But that does not mean that everything which we do can be explained in similar terms. Human beings salivate, like dogs—though this would scarcely be classed as a human action. It may therefore be that things which happen to us like salivation and eye-blinks can be sufficiently explained in mechanical terms—though I am not even sure about that. But one has to be very careful. For a blink, *qua* movement, is not all that different from a wink if you are looking at a person's profile. Yet the different words signify a difference between an action and something that happens to you—and to confuse the two might be fraught with dire social consequences. And it is absurd—logically absurd—to suppose that a deliberate wink in the middle of a staff-meeting has the same *sort* of explanation as the blink, which might be evinced if a psychologist puffed air at someone's eyeball. Similarly there are yawns and yawns. And if a lecturer sees someone yawning it is a real issue as to whether it is something that is happening to the man because of the heat of the room or something which he is doing deliberately to show that the lecturer is rather labouring a point. A deliberate yawn, like a wink, is something that is done for the sake of some end; it has conventional significance in certain social contexts. But a blink or a yawn may be things that happen to a man which have a more or less mechanical explanation. The beginning of wisdom in psychology is to realize that human goings-on are not all of a piece. There cannot therefore be any *one* type of explanation for them, any *one* type of learning. People who try to explain a

clever finesse at Bridge in the same sort of way as they explain leaping up when you sit on a thistle do not fail because they have not tried hard enough. They fail because they are trying to do something that is logically impossible — rather like doing a lot of physics and chemistry to find out what the good life is.

Aristotle, as a matter of fact, provided also a most suggestive model for psychology which takes account both of man's rule-following and of things which need some other sort of explanation. He suggested that there are levels of soul — the rational, the animal, and the vegetative. The lower is a necessary condition of the higher; but the higher modifies the way in which the lower operates and cannot be sufficiently explained in terms of it. And by 'soul' he did not mean a ghost in a machine. He meant a striving towards ends at different levels, which presupposes different levels of bodily organization, and different categories of explanation. We should not therefore suppose that much that human beings do could be explained in terms of a very simple category like movement. On the other hand we should not assume that everything can be explained in terms of the categories of rationality. The question always to ask about human behaviour is what *level* or *type* of explanation is relevant to what has to be explained. Is it a case of an action falling within the purposive rule-following category? Or is it the animal type of desire? Or is it even the vegetable in us at work?

How then, if we abandon the notion of an all-inclusive mechanical theory in psychology, is the task of psychology to be conceived? Well, the basic sciences of man must be rather like social anthropology—a study of the rules and goals by reference to which human actions are

described and explained. After all, most of our understanding of others derives from our understanding of the sorts of goals that men pursue in a given society and the sorts of means that are regarded as efficient and appropriate for attaining them. We know roughly what to expect when the chairman gets to his feet because we are familiar with the conventions for the conduct of meetings. But a visitor from a country without scientific and cultural institutions might be rather at a loss. He might think that the lecturer was going to dance or to smell out a witch or something. Now supposing he did start dancing. Or supposing that his performance broke down—that he got stuck and stood staring in a stricken way at the ceiling. Surely a psychologist should be called in at this point. For psychology is necessary to supplement the social sciences—to explain *deviations from, breakdowns in, and individual differences in adaptation* to the particular rules and goals in terms of which we give content to our rule-following purposive model of explanation.

And this is where education comes in. For surely one of the most obvious explanations of human differences in adaptation, and of breakdowns and deviations in performance, is that the conditions under which the rules are passed on are very different. Education is surely best described as the passing on of the information, skills, and traditions which are necessary to intelligent behaviour within a society, together with those higher-order skills and traditions which are necessary for assessing, criticizing, and modifying such rules and skills when necessary. The educative processes should therefore be one of the main subjects for psychologists to study. For parents and teachers are at the key points

where individual differences are generated as the rules and goals of a society are passed on. For just as the very learning of a language or of science, history, and mathematics opens up a common world for us, a form of life which we share with others; so also does the *manner* in which we are initiated into the paths cut by human language and conventions determine to a large extent the ways in which we walk differently along them. The social scientist and historian exhibits the structure of the form of life; the psychologist is concerned with the ways in which individuals adapt themselves to it and deviate from it. That is why I started by saying that I thought that we cannot begin to understand *human* learning unless we make a very careful study of the various educational techniques which, to a large extent, determine individual differences.

Now the psychologist who is concerned about the importance of learning theory for education often casts himself in the role of a Galileo, working on simple experiments in a laboratory in order to discover the basic laws of a theoretical science which could be handed on for teachers to apply. Pavlov is for him the paradigm — although it is worth noting that when Professor Luria was over here from Moscow recently he stated categorically that Pavlov, in his later years, proclaimed explicitly that his laws were relevant only to animal learning. Human learning, he maintained, needs a quite different set of laws. Luria then went through the Pavlovian laws and demonstrated how all of them were false at the human level. Human beings, astounding to relate, use language, and because of this there must be quite a different set of laws for human learning. In a very revealing passage Tolman, one of the earlier

and more impressive learning theorists, once let the cat out of the bag when he said:

'Let me close now with a final confession of faith. I believe that everything important in psychology (except perhaps such matters as the building up of a super-ego, that is everything save such matters as involve society and words) can be investigated in essence through the continued experimental and theoretical analysis of the determiners of rat behaviour at a choice point in a maze.'

But what a hollow confession of faith is this! For what is there of importance in human behaviour that does *not* involve society and words?

There is a case to be made for Galileo in psychology if all that is meant is that psychologists should reduce their problems to as simple terms as possible; formulate bold hypotheses about their solution; and subject them, if possible, to crucial tests. But there is nothing, in my view, to be said for following Galileo in psychology if this implies *also* attempting to use mechanical concepts and laws to explain all human behaviour—laws which have to be formulated by studying how rats or dogs behave in very circumscribed conditions. Psychology has been too long haunted not by the ghost *in* the machine but by the ghost *of* the machine.

There is, however, a very different picture of the psychologist's job in relation to education, which has a more practical and commonsense orientation. It maintains that most educational psychology is systematic common sense and that there is little in psychology that good teachers do not know already. The psychologist's job is to order what is already known and to give explanation of rather queer things like the phenomenon or perceptual constancies which teachers

have noted but have not taken to be of much theoretical interest.

Now I sympathize very much with this point of view; but it needs touching up and enlarging a bit. Teachers, as we all know, have a lot of hunches; but if asked to produce good evidence for them, they would be rather at a loss. I remember a teacher at a conference remarking that she had just read Professor Vernon's *Backwardness in Reading* and that she knew it all already. She was delighted to find so many of her hunches confirmed. But she did not mention what other hunches she had for which there was little evidence.

So one of the main tasks of psychology is to systematize and test the hunches of practical people like teachers, probation officers, welfare workers, and industrialists. In the educational sphere the pioneering work of Piaget should prove of great importance. For Piaget has tried to map the various steps in the ascent of the child to the rational level. Piaget is of vital importance to educationists because he takes language and concept formation very seriously. He claims, quite rightly, that speech and argument make possible a new level of thought. Furthermore he attempts to arrive at maturation levels at which certain types of concepts like that of quantity, weight, and volume can be grasped. In his earlier work on causality he showed how thinking starts by proceeding according to pre-rational principles where no account is taken of cause and effect as we understand it, or of logical connectedness, in this way providing confirmation of Freud's theory of the wish which works according to pre-rational principles. Also in his work on moral judgment he suggested generalizations about the differences in the child's attitude to rules at different

ages, whether the rules relate to morals or to playing marbles.

Now it is most important for teachers to know what concepts and skills are within the grasp of a child at a certain age. Professor Vernon, in her recent book, claims that in about seventy per cent of cases the main cause of backwardness in reading is that a child is made to read before reaching the required level of development. But the teacher also wants to know what techniques facilitate the grasp of the skill or concept in question and what sorts of conditions impair performances and lead to breakdowns *in addition* to the general one of instruction before the appropriate level has been reached. What Piaget says, for instance, of the new process needed to link concrete problems with the verbal statement of the problem may be very relevant here—especially to the age at which we teach mathematics and to the techniques by means of which we teach it. If mathematics is a special sort of abstract language, what techniques are best for bridging the gulf between this and fiddling around with oranges?

To take another example from a field with which I am more familiar—that of moral training. Piaget distinguished what he called the transcendental stage when children never question the validity of rules, from the autonomous stage where they no longer regard rules as externally imposed, but as alterable conventions that have some point to them. He seems to assume an automatic maturation from one level to another. But the fact is that a great number of human beings, even in our culture, do not emerge from the transcendental stage. Now given that we want children to develop to the autonomous stage, what techniques of passing on

rules are likely to encourage or impair such development? Here, I would suggest, the work of the Freudians on the super-ego and the origin of character-traits is very relevant. For the period of the formation of the super-ego roughly corresponds to Piaget's transcendental stage. And the theory of the super-ego and of character-traits is, roughly speaking, a theory which explains why people don't reach the autonomous stage, why they become compulsive, guilt-ridden and obsessed. And it uses the concept of being 'fixated' at various stages of growth. And this 'fixation' may well be due to the sort of training received at the various stages. Indeed it might be because they had received some form of 'conditioning'. The trouble about the theory of 'conditioning', when generalized indiscriminately beyond the level of salivation and eyelid blinks, is that it obscures the important question of what sort of phenomena *are* explicable in terms of a process like that of conditioning as distinct from one of training.

Now Piaget suggested that marbles and morals are more or less on a par as far as the child's attitude goes. Is his attitude to the rules of mathematics or music likely to be so different? Could it be that there are certain general principles about *techniques* which operate in all these seemingly different spheres? I know well enough that there are certain very general *necessary* conditions which apply to most spheres — such as the linkage with need and interest, the emotional relationship with adults and with other children, and the picture which the child has of himself, and so on. This is the perpetual swan song of people like Jersild. But granted all this, whether it is chess, mathematics, music, or morals that have to be passed on, there is surely a lot



to be said about the *techniques* of passing on the relevant rules in such a manner that the child will follow them and learn to apply them *intelligently* instead of in a purely mechanical manner. When I used to teach Latin I experimented constantly with this sort of thing. But, like most teachers, I relied on hunches and intuition. My suggestion is that Piaget provides a fruitful framework to keep learning theorists busy for another fifty or hundred years.

But the systematization and testing of such hunches is only part of the job of psychologists. For, as I remarked earlier, there are also odd phenomena which we come across that do not seem to fit into the ordinary model of commonsense explanation. And occasionally a psychologist of genius, such as Freud, lights upon an area of such phenomena, and develops a special theory to explain departures from our rule-following, purposive model. Freud's great contribution to psychology was to provide a subsidiary theory for a number of phenomena which have a certain family resemblance. There were first of all things like hysteria, dreams, visions, and fantasy. These are sorts of things which are not done 'on purpose', of which it would be odd to say that they were done for the sake of some end. Then there are slips of the tongue, lapses of memory, motor slips and stumbles, and perceptual mistakes. These represent *breakdowns* of or *lapses* from performances. When we describe them as 'unintentional' we bring out that they are not to be explained in terms of our purposive rule-following model. And then there are things like obsessions and compulsions which are either acts which are palpably inefficient in relation to their stated purpose, or which have a very queer kind of purpose. Freud's

genius consisted in linking these everyday phenomena with various types of insanity and giving the same sort of explanation for all of them—in terms of unconscious wishes and the mechanisms of defence against them.

Freud, in my view, provides a paradigm for the progress of psychology. For here we find problems arising in a practical context and a special explanation being provided for them to supplement the purposive rule-following model (which roughly corresponds to Freud's theory of the ego and the reality-principle). I am also prepared to admit that Pavlov provides another such paradigm provided that we see his type of explanation as one that must be given only for certain sorts of things that happen to us like salivation. What I object to is when the unconscious wish or conditioned response is taken not as a brilliant hypothesis to explain certain limited phenomena but as an all-inclusive postulate to explain things as various as salivation, pressing a lever, cutting potatoes with a knife, talking, being honest and decent, being taken in by a business man, and making a clever finesse at Bridge.

In the light of this development of a common view about the job of psychology I can explain a bit more what I meant when I said at the beginning that far from it being the case that educationists have a lot to learn from learning theory, learning theory has a great deal to learn from the study of the practice of education. I meant, of course, negatively, that generalizations of the stimulus-response model of classical learning theory were of little relevance to problems in the classroom; but I meant positively something like this. Teachers, roughly speaking, are specialists in the various educational techniques by means of which information, skills,

and traditions are handed on. Very little is known, in my opinion, about the most effective techniques for handing on these things at different ages. For what subjects and at what ages is drill and the use of authority effective—and effective for what? Do such techniques, if used at early ages, whether for mathematics or for morals, incapacitate the child for rational rule-following later on? Or are they a necessary preliminary without which later instruction will not be effective? What about reward and punishment? Do artificial incentives early on militate against the acquisition of skills in relation to genuine objectives later? How much can be learnt through imitation and by the ‘discipline of the task’ without much talk and chalk? What sorts of techniques, applied at various ages, lead to impairment of skills, breakdowns, blocks, and compulsive habits? What about the influence of social factors like the arrangement of the class, the attitude of the teacher, and the developing picture which the child has of itself in relationship to others?

Such matters are part of the air which educationists breathe. But how much has been definitely established about such matters? It was very interesting to note that Professor Luria at Moscow has been working on problems in this field—on the age at which orders help the child to master a manipulative task, on the difference made by instructions with an explanation, on working on your own as distinct from working with others, and so on. Along lines such as these I would suggest that a large part of the psychology of learning should develop. The *different* educational techniques—rational instruction, the use of authority, imitation, learning by ex-

perience, and reward and punishment, should be distinguished. And they should be studied in relation to the acquisition of all sorts of different skills and the passing on of different types of information and rules.

But it would be as mistaken to assume that we can explain *all* learning in terms of such a model of training by conscious techniques as it would be to assume that we can explain it all in terms of conditioning. We must remind ourselves again of Aristotle's levels of soul—the rational, the animal, and the vegetative. Modern psychology could help to tidy up these levels and to state the laws according to which we operate at them. As Freud and Piaget have shown, children are at a transitional stage between the animal and the rational level. Physiology, conditioning theory, the Freudian wish, and so on, suggest laws for functioning at such different levels. And when we get breakdowns in performance or defects and lapses, these can be seen as the animal, the child, and perhaps the vegetable in us taking over. Different types of learning characterize different levels. And there might well be generalizations about general conditions—e.g. suggestibility, fatigue, motivation—which apply at all levels.

The employment of this type of explanatory model together with the abandonment by psychologists of their Galilean dreams might well have two types of beneficial effects. On the one hand learning theory might benefit enormously by the careful experimental study of situations under which human beings learn all sorts of different things rather than by a concentration on highly artificial situations where rats and dogs learn very limited things. On the other hand the careful

generalizations developed by psychologists might really be of some use to teachers and other practical people who have the function of passing on the skills and knowledge essential to civilization. Indeed the psychology of learning might even cease to be an embarrassment to distraught lecturers who have the thankless task of trying to teach aspiring teachers how to teach.



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